

# FORGED<sup>TM</sup>

## by Dragons Fire



A BOOK OF WONDERS FOR MAGE: THE ASCENSION®

# FORGED<sup>TM</sup> BY Dragons Fire

## RELICS OF LEGENDRY AND INFANTRY

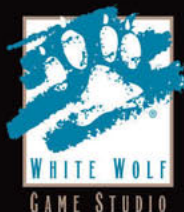
From amulets, flying carpets and magic wands to cold fusion generators and ray guns, magical tools have always fascinated the popular imagination. They also fascinate mages, for they can actually make these daydreams real. But the universe no longer accepts powerful magic. Where wizards once forged swords that could cleave mountains, now they must be content with remote-control cars. Or must they...? Can Paradox be thwarted long enough to once more allow the forging of weapons of old?

## WIELDED WITH AWAKENED WILL

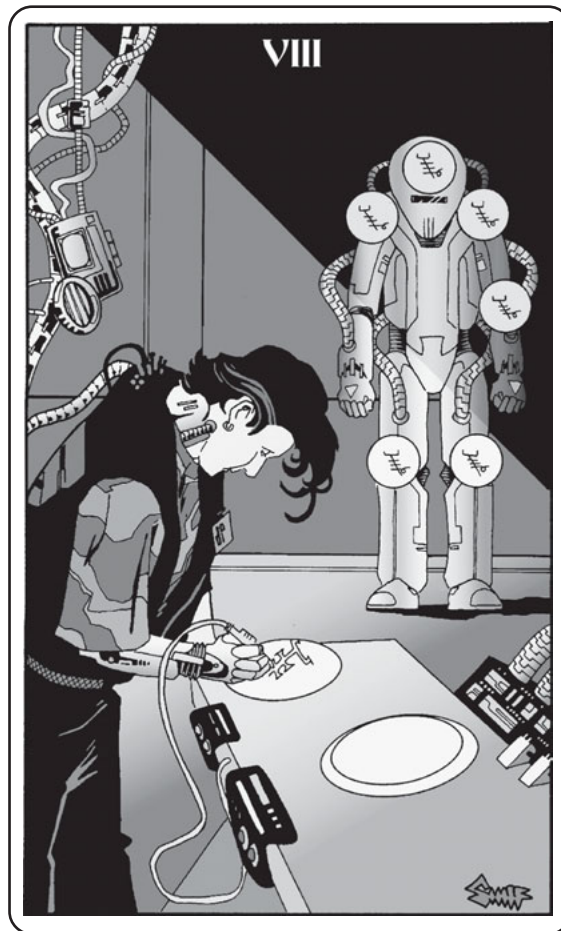
**Forged by Dragon's Fire** is a book of Wonders, presenting advanced creation rules for Artifacts and Inventions, Charms and Gadgets, Fetishes, Periapt, Talismans and Devices, and more. Also included are expanded rules for Familiars, companion spirits manifest in flesh who hold a key to piercing the Storm that rages between the worlds.

# MAGE<sup>®</sup> THE ASCENSION

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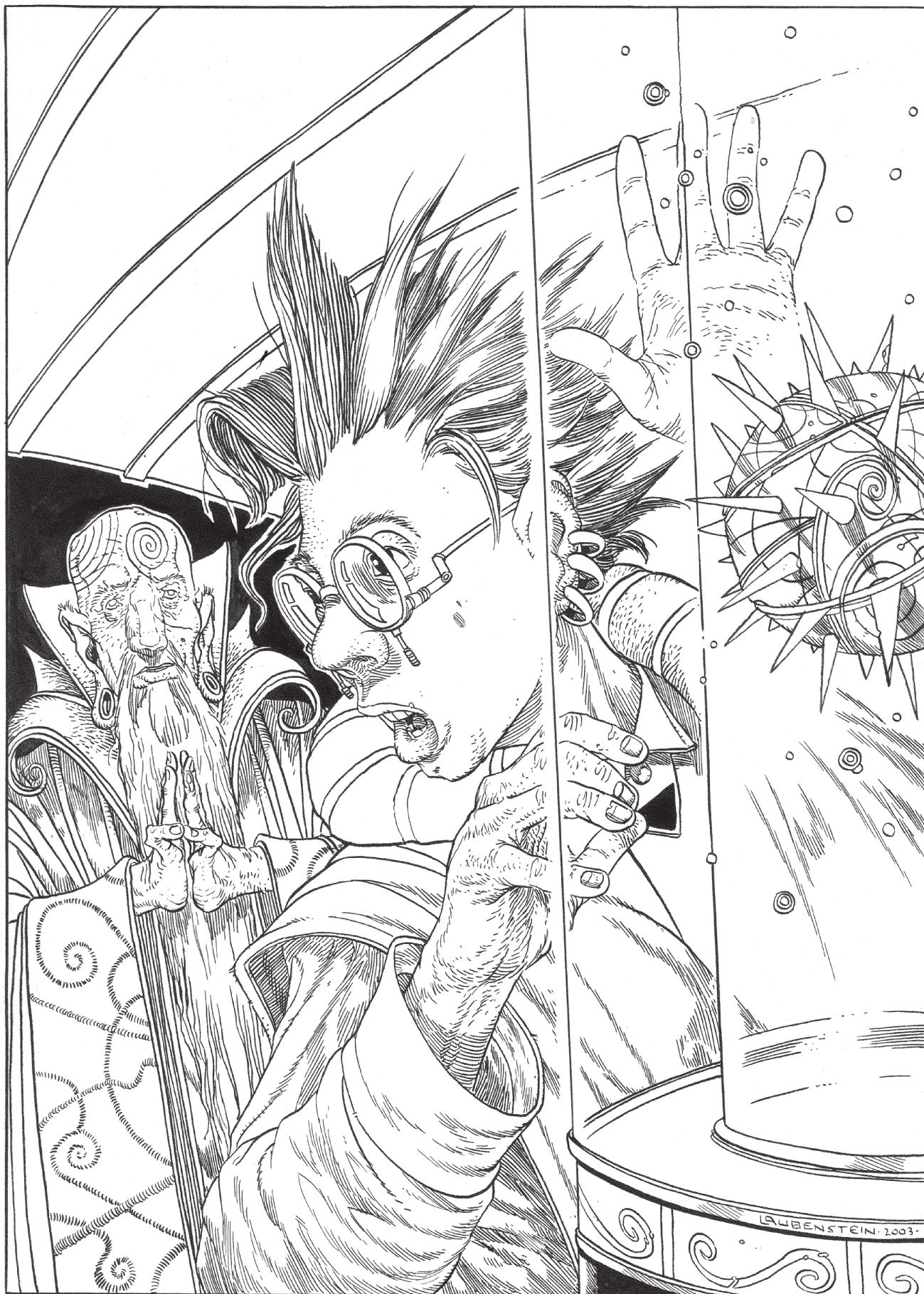


BY KRAIG BLACKWELDER, LEONARD GENTILE AND JOHN SNEAD

# FORGED<sup>TM</sup> BY Dragons Fire

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# PROLOGUE: AFTER HOURS



*Damn, I am so cool,* thought Zero Blank to himself as he slipped past what he thought had to be some of the most complex magical defenses ever devised. Zero ("Rhymes with arrow, not hero," as he frequently told new acquaintances) had ample reason to be pleased with himself. It had only been a little over a year ago that he had Awakened in the middle of a dance floor. But now, a globe-spanning year of (more-or-less) aggressive training later, he was good enough to slip unnoticed into the Hermetic museum chantry on Erie Street in Chicago's Gallery district.

For the moment, Blank considered himself a stealth operative in the Ascension War, but he looked forward to the day when he would actually clash with the forces of the Technocracy toe to toe, Effect against Effect. If he were lucky, this visit would provide him with the tools he needed to really kick some MIB ass.

He had heard about the Hermetic museum through the Ghastly Gothic Grapevine, the Chicago Hollowers' disturbingly accurate rumor mill and divination tool. The collection housed here was, allegedly, the Hermetic version of a toy museum. When he'd heard about it, he was stunned that weapons usable against the Technos were sitting on velvet pillows under glass. Without hesitation he had resolved to liberate a few of the more powerful objects for his personal use. *Use it or lose it,* he thought. *No guts, no glory.* Carpe diem.

*Idioms,* he thought, *make remarkably handy foci.*

His "You snooze, you lose" rote — a less component-intensive version of an old Hand of Glory spell he'd picked up from a witchy bisexual girl he'd slept with once in Berlin — had gotten him past the house's living guardians. Subsequently, his "If I Were a Collection of Rare Magical Artifacts, Where Would I Be?" rote showed him exactly where the collection was and how to get there.

It was, unsurprisingly, in the basement, and all he had to do to get to it was pass through two secret doors, down the heavily warded stairs and into the Tech-hostile gallery room. Piece of cake.

Within seconds, he wended his way into the gallery chamber. The lamps, beautiful Tiffany originals, illuminated enough of the room that he wasn't totally blind, but the walls

were made of dark wood that, quite literally, devoured most of the light.

Zero Blank thought the place was misnamed, because it much more closely resembled a library than a museum. Every dark wall was a floor to ceiling bookcase. He was glad he hadn't picked up magic the way those arrogant bookworm Hermetics did. His eyes would have fallen out by now.

The important features of the small hallway were unmistakable: sitting unadorned and seemingly unprotected on display pedestals was an astonishing array of immensely powerful artifacts.

As he approached the display pedestals, he noticed that, as with any museum, a card bearing an explanation of the item sat in front of each piece.

*Perfect,* he thought. *Now I'll know which of these things can kick ass and which ones I can forget about.*

The object on the first pedestal looked like a revolver as envisioned by H. R. Giger. There was no mistaking what it was — a revolver can't be greatly altered and remain a revolver — but its lines were too fluid to have come from a factory. It looked aerodynamic, beautiful, sculpted rather than... *made* like real guns were, however that happened.

It was only after trying to read the card that he realized it wasn't in English. He nearly swore until he remembered that he had a pair of Dr. Banray's All-Purpose Vision-Granting Reading Spectacles in his pocket. The Specs were more substantial and dramatic than garden-variety sunglasses, but far less bulky than those odd contraptions worn by the Sons of Ether. And the lenses, being perfectly round, had recently come back into fashion.

He'd won them off a crazy Etherite one night after a long series of Backgammon games he'd played in a male brothel in Budapest when he should have been working. While he usually wore them only on the dance floor (because their appearance was so... unique), they also happened to have a few other occasionally convenient Effects if the wearer knew the appropriate trigger phrase. One of these Effects was translating foreign languages, and, luckily, Blank knew the right words.

Glancing around nervously (and with slight embarrassment), he whispered the incantation under his breath.

"Beware! Beware!

His flashing eyes! His floating hair!  
Weave a circle round him thrice,  
and close your eyes with holy dread,  
for he on honeydew hath fed  
and drunk the milk of Paradise."

Immediately upon completing the recitation, Blank's hair stood up on end and the All-Purpose Spectacles began to throw off a jagged spray of blue and purple sparks. And the words of the text in front of him became perfectly legible.

#### MAGGOT REVOLVER

*This is the only known model of these dark beauties ever to be brought back from the Afterlands whole and functioning. Though it appears to be a finely crafted .357 revolver, the weapon shoots inch-long carnivorous larvae that, after a successful shot, burrow through the target's flesh toward the heart from wherever they initially lodge. Though repulsive, this is truly an exquisite and remarkably dangerous piece of forgecraft.*

On loan from Philippe Aurillon of the Pomegranate Deme order of the Euthanatoi

His immediate impulse was to grab the revolver and stuff it in the waistband of his pants, but he wasn't quite sure what kinds of security rotes the pedestals might be rigged with — and, having seen *Raiders of the Lost Ark* hundreds of times as a kid, he knew this was likely to be the most dangerous part. He deemed it the wiser course of action to wait until he'd seen everything and then choose from among them something that would really help him out. That way, if he had to beat a hasty retreat, he would do so with the best of the items in his possession.

The item on the next pedestal was a carefully crafted, but stunningly ugly gold mask. The creature portrayed appeared to have been cursed with the worst aspects of a monkey and a toucan.

Blank directed his gaze to the explanatory note on the pedestal.

#### THE SPIRIT MASK OF TALOZOZOATL

*Among the most powerful mystical artifacts discovered in the New World, this spirit mask, properly wielded, could easily have routed Cort  zar and his Conquistadors from their plundering of South America. And yet, apparently, it was never used.*

Blank was impressed, vaguely, but he forgot the spirit mask entirely when he came to the next pedestal. On it lay an open silk fan, obviously of Asian origin; whiskered Chinese dragons cavorted across its pleated surface. He had seen silk fans before, of course. The Chicago Art Institute had an exhibition of the art of Taoism some years back and he'd seen enough fans, silk and dragons to render him jaded toward such things.

But this one was different. Time had not faded the vibrant colors of the inks as it usually did with such treasures. The dragons were vivid, bright and menacing (as they ought to

be, thought Blank), and when he looked closely, it seemed as though their bulbous dragon eyes were intently staring back at him.

Perhaps, he thought, this is the weapon I'm looking for. He found the idea of unleashing dragons on the Technocracy's forces strangely satisfying.

Upon reading the card he found himself disappointed, but intrigued in other ways nonetheless.

#### THE INESTIMABLY LOVELY PLUM BLOSSOM DREAM FAN OF MADAM ZHUN LIAO

*Called the Flawless Pearl Princess of the Dragon Wizard Family, Zhun Liao is considered one of the foremost crafters of Wonders in China from the 16th to the late 19th century. Properly triggered, the fan changes color, dances through the air in hypnotic patterns, exudes extraordinarily potent opium smoke and sings lullabies in Japanese, Hindi, Thai and two different dialects of Chinese. The visions it delivers have been described variously as "mind boggling," "angelic," and "devastating." On a handful of occasions, the weak-willed have allowed themselves to fall so enrapt with the fan's somniferous dance that they have perished of starvation.*

The fan intrigued Blank, but he was there to find weapons, not head toys.

He glanced up to see how many more treasures there were to examine, but the column of pedestals seemed to continue on interminably down the gallery hall. That was fine with him, as it gave him more to choose from.

On the next pedestal rested an item much more in line with his needs.

Blank initially thought he was looking at a ball of barbed wire, but upon closer inspection he saw that it was composed of nested spheres of jagged metal, each spinning in its own direction. How many of the jagged layers spun, one within the other, Blank could not say. He tallied eight before the spheres' constant whirling made him lose count. At the sphere's unseen center, something glowed red.

#### THE HUNGER SPHERE OF CLEYWYDD LLYD

*As exquisite an example of demented craftsmanship as ever there has been, the Hunger Sphere, when triggered, grinds to splinters and devours whatever its controller directs it to. The sphere is here seen in its smallest, resting position, though there are magi still alive who remember the last time the ball was used at its full 30-foot diameter during the Wizard March on Caer Cleywydd Llyd. Due to its extraordinary resistance to magic, the sphere was able to overcome and devour eight magi before Master Porthos himself forced the monstrous device into quiescence.*

*Its presence here fulfills a secondary function as a cenotaph for the fallen.*

*In memoriam:*

*Maria del Alto fuego, Hermes bani Flambeau*

*Miguel Peralto, Hermes bani Flambeau*

*Duncan Teague, Hermes bani Flambeau*

Isaac of Bruges, *Hermes bani Janissary*

Jack Hawthorne, *bani Verbenae*

Gretchen of Zurich, *bani Celestial Chorus*

Souhir ben-Hamida, *bani Ahl-i-Batin*

Thukpak Singe, *bani Euthanatoi*

Blank's eyebrows shot up. This was precisely what he was looking for. He knew a thousand ways to learn trigger phrases, and he would find one for this as well. With its resistance to magic (and presumably science), it would provide exactly the advantage he needed. He made a grab for the ball, but an invisible barrier stopped his hand. He began formulating a "Get the fuck out of my way" rote, but a firm, dry voice distracted him.

"Stop that before you hurt yourself."

Zero Blank wheeled on the ball of his foot to face the interloper, a man of such age that he seemed as insubstantial and fragile as rice paper, almost hard to discern in his long, formal Hermetic robes.

"Calm down, young man," he said. "I've no intention of hurting you, though you certainly won't be taking the Hunger Sphere with you. It's much too dangerous to let slip into the hands of a loose cannon like yourself."

"So much as one syllable of Greek and I'll vaporize you," said Zero in a hostile tone.

"Greek?" said the old man, quizzically. "It's the Babylonian you need to watch out for, but, I say again, please calm down. I would challenge you to *Certámen*, but I don't think you'd last more than 15 seconds, even *with* your sneak magic helping you eel out of the worst of it."

"I'll do anything it takes to get weapons for the Ascension War, and you can't stop me."

"Not to be argumentative, but I can, actually. But you're tilting at windmills, dear boy. We've already lost the war, haven't you heard? As precious as your enthusiasm is, pitting yourself against the Technocracy now would be like a firefly throwing itself into battle against a swarm of hungry bats, which is to say, suicidal. If you want to fight the Technocracy, by all means, go ahead, but you won't be taking any of these wondrous antiquities with you."

"How am I supposed to fight if I don't have any weapons?"

"There's nothing wrong with good old fashioned rotes, now is there? But if you insist on using Artifacts, I would

recommend making your own. It may seem like reinventing the wheel, but, believe me, you'll save yourself a great deal of trouble, not to mention Paradox, by creating items that echo with your own era and don't call on the obsolete insights of dead ages."

"How the hell am I supposed to do that?"

"Stop being so helpless, young man; it's unbecoming. A good first step, if I may say so, is to read a book, Mr. Blank. Have you ever read *The World's Foundation* by Aristippé of Minos?"

"No," the Hollower replied. "What is it?"

The mage waved a finger and a book flew from its place on the shelves and into Blank's hands. "It's a Grimoire containing an introduction to the arts of Prime. If you want to create weapons for this guerilla campaign of yours, you'll need it."

Blank stared at the old, old book in his hands. "Am I supposed to buy this from you or what?"

The old, old mage regarded the young man in black with a look of poorly veiled amusement.

"Don't delude yourself into believing that you could afford it, Mr. Blank. Just read it and open your mind to its understanding."

"And when I'm done with it?"

"It will come back by itself once you've finished it or when you've let it sit unstudied for too long."

"That's pretty trippy."

"Quite so. Aristippé of Minos was a brilliant mage and an excellent teacher in his time. But that is a lecture for my students — of which, alas, you are not one. So, thank you for helping me test my security measures. Your unorthodox magical style has given me a great deal with which to keep my old mind occupied for a few hours. Now," said the old mage, "go home."

With that, the dim light of the gallery went out. The next thing Blank recognized was the reflection of the tinfoil that covered the windows of his unrepentantly Gothic sanctum. The old, sturdily bound book still rested in his hands, weighty as a gold ingot.

After emitting a long sigh of frustration, Zero Blank opened the incunabulum to its first yellowed page.



# INTRODUCTION: ARTS & CRAFTS



Enchanted swords. Magical wands. Flying carpets. Animal familiars. Grimoires. The legendary stuff of wizardry. But is all this outdated? Is it unnecessary in the modern era? Impossible, even? Certainly, running down the street swinging a screaming sword that eats souls is just asking for Paradox — or an All-Points Bulletin. The same's true with the flying carpet — and it doesn't even have seat belts. Even hypertechnology guns and hovercars can garner Paradox. What's a modern mage supposed to do? Perhaps it's just best to do without such things, to not rely on magical stuff to get by. This has been the assumption of late. Wonders, after all, aren't exactly common, and they're time consuming and hard to make.

Magic in **Mage** is often abstract or unseen — coincidental Effects can be fun to pull off, but rarely make for exciting images. But that's okay; such things give **Mage** a special flavor all its own. But every now and then, it'd be nice to unsheathe a Sword of Power or unfold a nanotech automobile from your pocket watch at the touch of a button. *Stuff* is cool, and it looks neat,

too. The trick is to fit it into the game without losing **Mage's** essential character — a game about modern wizards who don't need wands or spellbooks.

**Forged by Dragon's Fire: A Book of Wonders** is an expansion of the final chapter from the **Mage Storytellers Companion** (the slim book bundled with the revised edition **Storytellers Screen**). The title deliberately hearkens to an older age when magical things were more common and valued than in the modern era (**Dark Ages: Mage** depicts the waning of that era).

In post-Reckoning times, Masters are rare. Many of them were in the Umbra when the shit hit the fan and a lot of them have yet to make it back out again. Some of them left some nifty stuff behind or lost it in the Umbra, where it is now up for grabs. The newly Awakened may well risk life and limb to get ahold of these tools — valuable to those who can't yet reap the whirlwind with their own wills.

So why use Wonders again? Because, even though they *can* attract Paradox, they're more *believable* to most people, and hence probably won't attract as much. Vulgar magic that clearly comes from a thing or device of some kind *might* garner less Paradox even in direct

view of witnesses. People are often far quite willing to ascribe amazing feats to high technology; they are even more willing to believe that magic comes from magical things than from magical people. Hence, using a Wonder may give the mage a slight edge in this modern era, which is otherwise so hostile to traditional magic. But this edge can't be counted on. It's not a free ticket away from Paradox; it's simply a means to avoid the extra scourge that witnesses provide *under the right circumstances*. These circumstances are described below.

## MITIGATING PARADOX

Wonders provide a potent advantage for the modern willworker: they can *mitigate* the effects of Paradox. A mage using a Wonder to perform vulgar magic will still receive Paradox for casting vulgar magic, but the Sleepers in the area may not be so jarred that they respond with aggressive disbelief; without that disbelief causing reality to clench up and swat the mage, he can get away with more than he otherwise could.

Note that this only works with *certain* Wonders in *certain* cases, and how much a given Wonder allows a mage to get away with varies widely from situation to situation. Items that convey powers of invisibility are quite popular because they don't allow Sleepers to see *anything*, but if the mage wearing that invisibility belt should bump into a Sleeper and get caught doing something "impossible," Paradox *will* slap him.

That said, the modern, highly materialistic paradigm of our modern age stresses the power and efficiency of *things*. Upon witnessing a Wonder's use, a spectator might be just as likely to say "I saw an infomercial for one of those things once. Man, that must have cost you a fortune!" as to think, "I can't believe he just did that." The reaction might also vary with the observers. A New York City street gang might accept that a weapon that shoots fireballs is just a gun with fancy ammo (that they'll go looking for next time they're in a gun store), while a cloak of shadows will elicit a response of "No fucking way!" that will hit the mage with nasty vulgar-with-witnesses Paradox. Likewise, on a dark winter evening in Maine when the sky is spitting snow, the cloak of shadows might seem to fit in as perfectly appropriate, if for no other reason than that the witnesses' minds are all primed to accept strange, dark things in such weather and ignore all but the most glaring abuses of such a Wonder.

The Inventions of the Technocracy as well as those of the Virtual Adepts and Sons of Ether can often get the benefit of the doubt (or the benefit of the *absence* of doubt) from most uninformed witnesses. Many times they can benefit from what some Technocrats call

"skepticism fatigue," a condition that appears in Sleepers who just no longer have the energy or will to be surprised, shocked or disbelieving every time some amazing new Invention comes around. Instead of responding with "that can't happen," many Sleepers assume that they just haven't kept up with the latest round of technological innovation. "If they can put man on the moon and create handheld computers, why not jet boots? Whoever made those is going to be rich."

This doesn't give mages carte blanche to run around using Wonders left and right and expecting immunity to Paradox. There has to be something about the circumstance, the crowd, the setting or the particular Wonder that would account for the Sleepers' acceptance of this particular form of magic. Flying propulsion boots (and most other Inventions) won't be hard to pass off around any military base as real cutting-edge technology, for instance — provided you don't fly by a physics professor who *knows* that such things couldn't work. A flaming sword, on the other hand, would be met with a great deal more resistance — unless you were near a movie set or in a theater ("Wow, those special effects (or props) sure are realistic!"). Likewise, children (and even college students) have much less rigid natures and are as likely to respond with cheers of "Cool!" as "No way!"

The Storyteller should decide how much or how little leeway to allow the players based on his notion of the Sleepers in the setting, the Wonder in question and how "believably" the characters are using that Wonder.

## ADDITIONAL PARADOX HANDLING OPTIONS

While most Wonders can probably be considered Paradox mitigating (Storyteller's discretion), certain Wonders can possess additional means of handling Paradox. Usually, only Artifacts and Talismans can incorporate the following methods; Charms and Periaptis cannot, and Fetishes may only incorporate Paradox absorption (see below).

How a particular Wonder deals with Paradox varies from one Wonder to the next (and some, by the nature of their magic, tend to accrue more than others), but mages have devised four models of Paradox handling that can be incorporated into a Wonder's crafting. The names for these models differ dramatically: the Hermetics of House Verditius use a relatively stiff nomenclature to describe these models of Paradox dispersal, but most younger mages (and pretty much all Hollow Ones) use a more colorful street language to denote the same phenomena.

To instill any Paradox handling ability besides mitigating into a Wonder, a Prime 5 Effect must be used during the enchantment stage, instead of the standard Prime 4 Effect, regardless of the Tass used.

**Note:** All of these Paradox handling methods apply *only* to Paradox garnered by use of the Wonder, not to any Paradox the mage himself garners through magic worked without the Wonder.

**Exception:** A Talisman can store its creator's Paradox even when it isn't being used, if the mage is in contact with it. The mage cannot transfer his previously accumulated Paradox into his Talismans; they can only absorb Paradox gained after their creation.

Handling Paradox from a botch or other incident is an all-or-nothing choice; the mage can choose to have the Wonder handle all of the Paradox she generates, or she can deal with the Paradox herself. The mage must make this choice before the Arete dice are rolled. As a result, an unexpectedly bad botch can overload the Wonder's capacity and cause it to backlash (for accruing Wonders) or explode (for absorbing Wonders). The fact that some Wonders hold up to 20 or 25 points of Paradox can make them exceedingly dangerous. Few mages survive a 25-point Paradox Backlash without being mentally and physically twisted beyond possibility of recovery.

## PARADOX MITIGATING

As described above, most Wonders are, by default, Paradox mitigating. The mage absorbs any and all Paradox generated by using the Wonder's magic, just as if he were casting a rote. However, as mentioned above, in cases where Sleepers might accept the Wonder as ordinary, the magic can be considered vulgar without witnesses (or even coincidental, in some situations).

## PARADOX ACCRUING ("PIGGYBANK")

**Cost:** Accrues 10 Paradox points per +1-point Wonder cost (requires five pawns of Tass per extra point)

Wonders that "piggybank" Paradox can be incredibly dangerous to the mage despite the initial joy in using a Wonder that seemingly delivers no Paradox at all. The mage never even knows when the magic of the Wonder incurs Paradox; instead, the Wonder stores it (the Storyteller tracks accrual). When the Paradox becomes greater than the Wonder can bear (10 Paradox per extra point spent on the Wonder), the entire amount is unleashed and delivers a fiery Paradox Backlash to the mage currently using the item.

To add a Paradox accruing ability to a Wonder, the crafter must create a Paradox Periapt; this requires

five pawns of Tass per extra point (all of the same Resonance) and a Matter 5 Effect to fuse the Tass into the Wonder. The Wonder can accrue 10 Paradox points per extra point added to the Wonder cost. Unlike normal Periapts, however, it cannot store Quintessence, only Paradox. (For more on Periapts, see pp. 39-43.)

## PARADOX ABSORBING ("SPONGE")

**Cost:** Accrues 10 Paradox points per +1-point Wonder cost (requires five pawns of Tass per extra point)

Absorber Wonders, as their name implies, simply absorb any Paradox they generate. Once they have reached their capacity (10 Paradox per extra point spent on the Wonder), however, they shatter and lose their ability to work magic. If the mage can be certain to let these sorts of Wonders lie fallow for periods of time (see *Bleeding Paradox*, below), they can be among the best Wonders a mage can use. More often than not, however, mages eager to use their Paradox-free toy again underestimate the amount of Paradox such a Wonder has absorbed and overuse it, resulting in the item's destruction. It's important to note that mages don't think of Paradox as "a four-point Backlash" or "an eight-point Backlash"; they simply think of being stung, fried or bitchslapped by Paradox. Consequently, there's no way for a mage to know if a Wonder needs to lie fallow for three days or for 15. (As with Paradox accruing, the Storyteller keeps track of the Wonder's Paradox tally.)

To add a Paradox absorbing ability to a Wonder, the crafter must create a Paradox Periapt; this requires five pawns of Tass per extra point (all of the same Resonance) and a Matter 5 Effect to fuse the Tass into the Wonder. The Wonder can accrue 10 Paradox points per extra point added to the Wonder cost. Unlike normal Periapts, however, it cannot store Quintessence, only Paradox. (For more on Periapts, see pp. 39-43.)

## PARADOX RANDOMIZATION ("RANDOM SITTACKDOWN")

**Cost:** +1-point Wonder cost

The Wonder doesn't store Paradox at all but assigns it immediately. The difference is that randomization Wonders have an equal likelihood of assigning their Paradox load to *any* Awakened individual in the area. The mage *might* get the Paradox from using the Wonder, but it might fall instead onto his cabal-mate or — even better — to his opponent. The area usually equals a radius of the Wonder's point cost x5 in yards, but the

Storyteller can extend this randomly if someone outside the area is interacting significantly with the Wonder (such as scrying it or using psychokinesis to snatch it). Since it sucks to inadvertently trigger a friend's Paradox Backlash, mages with randomization Wonders are likely to use them only in solitude or when they can maintain a good distance from their friends. That, of course, comes with risks of its own....

### PARADOX SCATTERING ("SHARE THE LOVE"):

**Cost:** +1-point Wonder cost

Like the accruing Wonder, above, scattering Wonders store up Paradox, but when the bubble bursts, instead of channeling all of the Paradox to the mage using the Wonder, these items dole out a little of the Paradox to every Enlightened individual in a 10-foot radius, with the mage using the item getting the largest chunk. *If* the Wonder is powerful and necessary to the situation at hand, and *if* the mage has a large cabal and every member gets only a few points of Paradox, the mage might be able to warrant using such a Wonder, but the mage who garners his cabal-mates six or seven points of Paradox for something lame is going to have a lot of explaining to do.

### BLEEDING PARADOX

Wonders that accrue or absorb up Paradox, while potentially dangerous, have one advantage that other Wonders don't have: under the right circumstances, they can bleed off Paradox so that, over time, even a Paradox accruing piggybank with a whopping 20 points of Paradox can shed its burden.

A Wonder bleeds off Paradox at the rate of one point per day *if and only if* it's left to rest, completely undisturbed, at a Node. In such cases, the strong flow of Quintessence around the Wonder helps dilute and wash away the Paradox from the item.

If the mage doesn't have access to a Node, the Wonder will bleed off one point of Paradox per month of complete disuse.

#### Paradox Channel and Bind

There are other ways of off-loading Paradox from a Wonder. Mages with Prime 5 can channel the Paradox

out of the Wonder and bind it into any other item they choose. Items Prime-charged with the Prime 2 **Enchant Item** Effect can hold the Paradox long enough for it to harmlessly fade away on its own. Non-enchanted items cannot hold Paradox for more than a day or two, and they become "Paradox capacitors" holding a charge until the next suitable (i.e., Awakened) individual touches the item or just passes close enough. Putting Paradox, say, where an enemy Technocrat might stumble across it (like in his pistol grip or the door to his car) is a great way of handicapping an enemy.

### Swallowing Paradox

Finally, some familiars can consume Paradox from Wonders. The spirit's owner has to decide whether to have the Familiar consume *his* Paradox or that from *his* Wonder. A Paradox-nullifying familiar can consume its Background cost worth of Paradox once per week.

## OUTLINE

This book aims to make Wonders a more vital part of the post-Reckoning era.

- **Prologue: After Hours** — A mage encounters a library full of Wonders and must decide which one to steal.

- **Tools of the Trade: Wonders** — Using and creating a host of Wonders, including: Artifacts and Inventions, Charms and Gadgets, Fetishes and Periapt. Includes bountiful samples of many such Wonders.

- **Fragments of Their Creators' Will: Talismans & Grimoires** — Some Wonders are imbued with shards of their creator's own enlightenment, making them perhaps the most potent and useful types of Wonders. Talismans have Arete, and can thus act on their own, even in the hands of Sleepers. Grimoires can enlighten readers about the secrets of the universe — and hence provide them a means of increasing their own Arete. Includes many samples.

- **Companions on the Path: Familiars** — Mages don't need to go it alone. Besides cabal-mates, a mage can have a more personal companion. A familiar is a spirit given material form, bonded to a mage and tasked with aiding his magical quests. This chapter provides expanded rules for familiar creation.

## LEXICON

**Mage** uses many traditional terms in special ways; below is a glossary that explains it all:

**Artifact:** An object or living being enchanted with one or more magical Effects, such that an Awakened individual can wield it to cast those Effects. The technomagic equivalent is called an Invention.

**Charm:** A one-shot Wonder. Each Charm provides a magical power for only a short time, until its material shell is used up: the enchanted candle has burned out, the magical bullet has been fired, etc. The technomagic equivalent is called a Gadget.

**Device:** See Talisman.

**Familiar:** A spirit with a persistent material form, bonded to a mage as a magical ally.

**Fetish:** An object that hosts a spirit. Fetishes are made using Spirit magic.

**Gadget:** See Charm.

**Grimoire:** A book or other form of data-storage device that is imbued with a piece of its creator's Enlightened Will and has been written (or coded) with superlative skill, such that an Awakened reader

can increase his knowledge about the inner workings of the universe (raise his Arete without a Seeking) or the Spheres (raise Sphere dots). A special type of Grimoire called a Primer can even spark Awakenings. The technomagic equivalent is called a Principia.

**Periapt:** A material object infused with Tass, capable of storing (and sometimes replenishing) Quintessence (and Paradox).

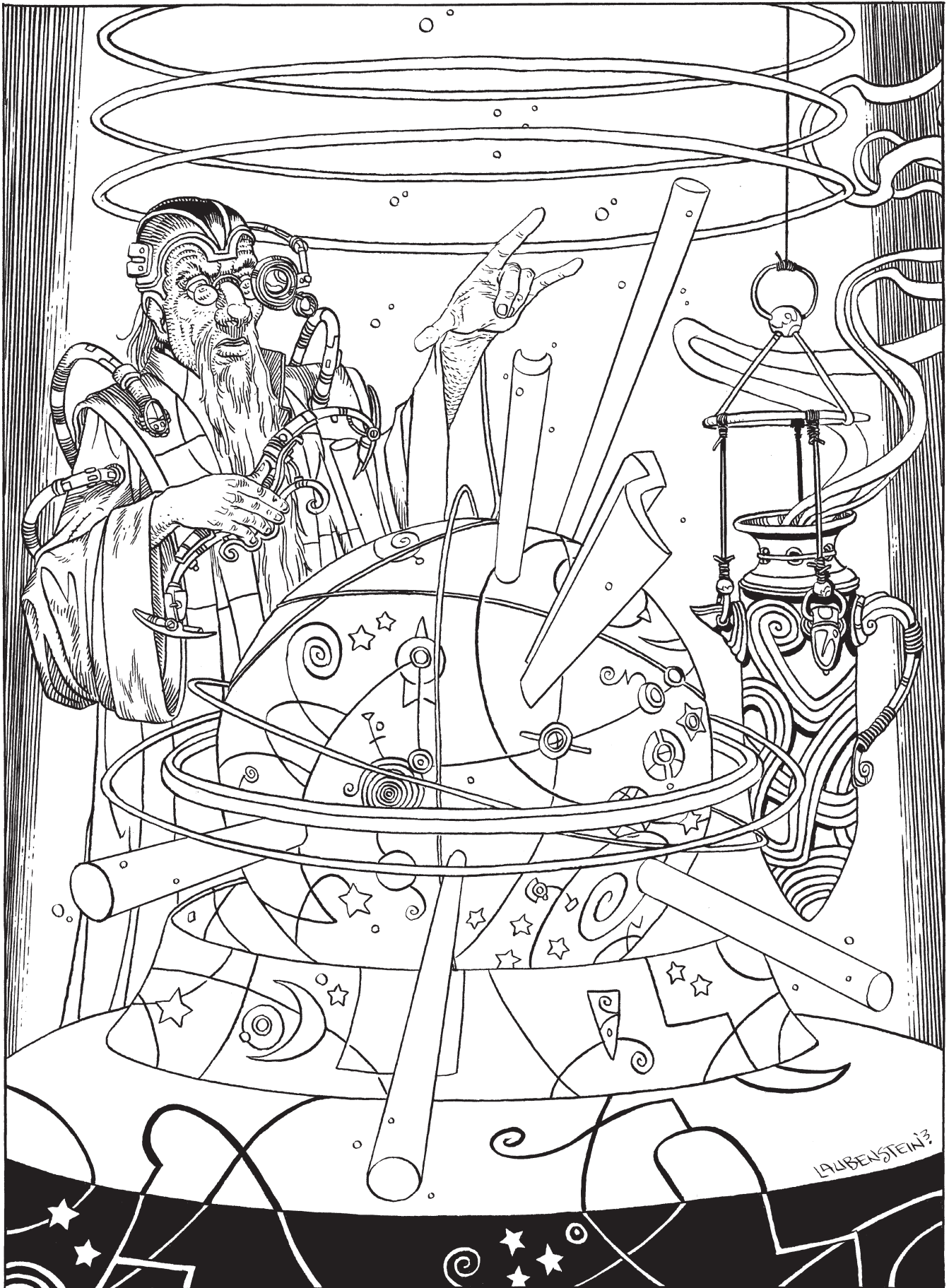
**Primer:** See Grimoire.

**Principia:** See Grimoire.

**Talisman:** An object or living being imbued with a piece of its creator's Enlightened Will. Talismans have their own Arete ratings, and can thus be used even by Sleepers, but they are otherwise like Artifacts. The technomagic equivalent is called a Device.

**"Q":** A slang term for technomage who relies too much on creating Wonders.

**Wonder:** A permanently enchanted item, either an object or a living being. It requires the Prime Sphere to make most Wonders.



# TOOLS OF THE TRADE: WONDERS

## ARTIFACTS & INVENTIONS



*Inventions reached their limit long ago, and I see no hope for further development.*

— Julius Frontinus, 1st century A.D.

The flaming sword. The impossibly stealthy boots. The scrying mirror. Probably the first “magic items” people think about (if they’re thinking about such things at all) are these sorts of Wonders: the household item that happens to have a few additional features that most others of its kind don’t. While none of these things is common per se, they’re all the sorts of things mages are likely to encounter and, if they’re lucky, use, in the course of their magical lives.

### THE NATURE OF ARTIFACTS AND INVENTIONS

Artifacts are common, day-to-day items that a mage has seen fit to create or enhance with extra abilities: a fancy Venetian Carnival mask that reads minds and tells the mage what people are thinking; X-ray specs; a magic book that imprisons souls, et cetera. All appear to be perfectly normal items until their extra abilities suddenly come into play, at which point they become valued treasures.

Though a vast paradigmatic gulf exists between the two, Inventions are, in function, the same thing, only using technomagic. Inventions seem a little less exotic than Artifacts, especially to a modern Western populous that places vast amounts of faith in things fabricated with science. Beyond their respective forms of creation, the effective difference between the cloak of invisibility and the bodysuit woven from light-bending polymers is practically nonexistent.

The Sons of Ether and Virtual Adepts are just as likely to use a strange mixture of magic and science as either of those forces by themselves. More surprising, however, is that because of the ubiquity of technology, many Tradition mages are finding themselves making Artifacts from common household items, producing hybrid Artifacts that just a hundred years ago would have been considered technomagic: scrying televisions, magically “enhanced” automobiles, teleportation elevators and the like.

### USING ARTIFACTS AND INVENTIONS

Artifacts work by optimizing the mage’s own magical abilities. An Artifact is like a rote and a focus all neatly bundled together and waiting for the spark of the mage’s

## NONE OF THE ABOVE

We've tried to break Wonders down into discrete categories for quick and easy clarification, but reality (even game reality) seldom fits so neatly into manmade systems. Wonders are no different.

While the vast majority of Wonders fit into one of the categories in this book, there are amazing and magical things that the characters might get their hands on that defy classification.

There are a few examples of such "miscellaneous" Wonders peppered throughout the World of Darkness: A powerful Thanatoic Master may journey to the Underworld and return with a maggot revolver and soul-steel shackles. A mage of the Verbena Tradition may discover

natural Wonders arising spontaneously in a deserted region where the Quintessence flow has waxed strong. A Celestial Chorister may watch an angel fall in battle and take up the fiery sword from its fading hand. A Hollower may become the beneficiary of certain strange items created by vampire Thaumaturgists... and so on, and so on.

If you're a Storyteller and your players are identifying the Wonders you throw their way too quickly, try throwing in some Wonders that don't fit into this classification system, or pull something in from another of White Wolf's many World of Darkness games.

You wouldn't want them to get bored.

Enlightenment. When the mage triggers the Artifact, it is the mage's own Arete that is rolled, but even one success is enough to elicit the Artifact's magical Effect (there is a reason mages go through the immense amount of work required to create an Artifact, after all). Artifacts with continuous Effects don't usually need to be rolled; they are always active, although the Storyteller can require occasional rolls now and then (usually at the beginning of a scene).

The careful crafting of an Artifact allows it to channel magical energy very effectively to a particular purpose. While Artifacts aren't known for being especially versatile, what they do, they do efficiently.

## CRAFTING ARTIFACTS AND INVENTIONS

A mage intent on creating an Artifact or Invention has to go into the process knowing that such grand acts of magic are extremely demanding. The necessary magical research, travel and preparation will absorb all of a mage's time and energy for many months. It may be very expensive. It may take its toll on the mage's relationships, especially those with lovers and cabal-mates who may be used to seeing more of the mage than Artifact crafting allows. Any mage undertaking lightly the creation of an Artifact will, at best, access whole new vistas of discouragement and, at worst, get chewed up and spat out.

The creation of Artifacts, in the modern world especially, is an act of nobility, dynamism and sacrifice and should only be attempted by those who know what they're getting themselves into.

## MATERIALS

Most Traditions have long-established guidelines for the kind of physical components used to blend into their Wonders. Once upon a time, the body parts of various magical beasts — dragon scales, griffin feathers, vampire ash — comprised major portions of the formulae for crafting the more

powerful Wonders. As those creatures have become more rare, mages have had to research other alternatives, some of which just don't do the job as well. Some Traditions, like the Virtual Adepts and the Sons of Ether, haven't had to worry about this as much, while the Wonder-forgers of the Order of Hermes have had to rewrite entire tomes relating to the creation of Artifacts, as old methods become either impossible or unrealistically difficult. For the Verbena, the sacred dew-drops gathered in the predawn hours during a full moon are still available, just not quite as readily as they once were.

Each Tradition has many, many material correspondences for each Sphere. The list below is, obviously, far from complete, but it at least gives some clue as to the Tradition's thinking with regard to the physical components of magical formulae.

Some of the items below illustrate components of magical formulae; others represent the materials most easily enchanted with magic by a particular Sphere.

### Akashic Brotherhood

Always highly attentive to detail, the Akashic Brotherhood has ever had a keen eye for components that have just the right magical essence. With the insights of the newly allied Wu Lung, the Akashic Brothers are currently undergoing a small renaissance in Wonder-creation.

**Correspondence:** A swatch of cloth cut from a sail.

**Entropy:** A mixture of gold dust and bone powder.

**Forces:** Splinters of a tree sundered by lightning.

**Life:** Alchemical elixirs.

**Matter:** Brass temple bells.

**Mind:** Strips of paper containing calligraphic prayers to the gods.

**Prime:** Colored sand.

**Spirit:** Jade.

**Time:** Silkworm cocoons.

### Celestial Chrous

The divine magic of the Choristers was once used for Wonder creation much more than it is these days. Holy armor and enchanted holy symbols have since gone out of

style and the Choristers have begun to lose some of the lore associated with the creation of Wonders.

**Correspondence:** Feather from an angel's wing.

**Entropy:** Saint's dust.

**Forces:** A splinter of the Spear of Destiny (or any saintly relic).

**Life:** Blood from a penitent's flogger.

**Matter:** Consecrated host.

**Mind:** Sacred incense.

**Prime:** Holy water.

**Spirit:** Gold.

**Time:** Rosary beads.

### **Cult of Ecstasy**

Cultists of Ecstasy are the least common forgers of Wonders, primarily because the very act of gathering components and crafting the item are somewhat foreign to the Cultists' present moment-oriented paradigm. The total abandonment of the self to Now that lies at the root of the Cult's power does not blend well with the focus and planning necessary to craft Wonders. Any mage can appreciate the advantages of Wonders, however, so even the normally distracted Cultists have been known to focus for long enough to create an Artifact or two.

**Correspondence:** Windowpane LSD.

**Entropy:** Poppies.

**Forces:** Red and yellow silk tassels.

**Life:** Crocus and lily stamens.

**Matter:** Dust from the labyrinth of Knossos (or other magical site).

**Mind:** Mushrooms.

**Prime:** Blood.

**Spirit:** Dust from the wings of rare butterflies.

**Time:** Drums or coca leaves.

### **Dreamspeakers**

Artifacts are not the Wonder of choice for most Dreamspeakers, who prefer to craft Fetishes using their specialty Sphere of Spirit. When they do create Artifacts, however, most shamanic mages weave, carve or sculpt them after long fasts and vision quests to ascertain just the right components — wool from sacred sheep or clay from the ground over a Node, for example.

**Correspondence:** Feathers.

**Entropy:** Bone shards.

**Forces:** Ashes.

**Life:** Pelts.

**Matter:** Clay.

**Mind:** Mushrooms, peyote or ayahuasca.

**Prime:** Pure water.

**Spirit:** Tobacco or eggs.

**Time:** Sand or dust.

## **QUICK AND DIRTY "ARTIFACTS"**

Some so-called "Artifacts" are nothing of the sort; rather, they are items that have simply been treated with permanent Pattern Effects. While these items are not artifacts in the technical sense of the word, that in no way detracts from their inarguable utility.

The most common approach to such cheap artifacts is to enchant a common item with a permanent Matter or Forces Effect. This simple magic is enough to make windows bulletproof, small items invisible (don't lose them), clothing impenetrable or a small machine utterly silent.

In game terms, accumulating twice the number of successes necessary to generate a particular Pattern Effect will make the result permanent. (The Storyteller can overrule this if he likes.)

The nature of these faux-Artifacts is generally simple. The item can be made of one or, at most, two simple, common substances — cloth, steel, paper, glass, wood — and the Effect itself must be simple.

The Sons of Ether, Hermetic House Solificati and the few remaining independent Children of Knowledge all make common use of such simple permanent magic. Characters who don't yet have the necessary mastery of Prime to create true Wonders can use simple permanent Pattern Effects to make truly useful items, and the more creative uses can result in surprisingly powerful items. A few examples follow.

- Spider silk has the greatest tensile strength of any substance known to man. Transmuting the cotton fibers of a union suit into spider silk renders the garment effectively impenetrable, turning aggravated damage into lethal and lethal damage into bashing.

- Enchanting the leather on the soles of a pair of boots to absorb sounds radiated within three inches will grant the mage a great degree of stealth when he's wearing them (subtracting 1 from the difficulty of all Stealth rolls).

- An inch-thick slab of steel rendered invisible makes a nice, safe picture window.

- A backpack with a permanent anti-gravity Forces Effect will seem weightless even when loaded with bars of gold bullion.

- The tripwire on a trap is much more effective when rendered invisible.

The helpful and powerful uses of such simple permanent Effects are infinite; creative players will get the most bang for their buck.

### **Euthanatos**

Thanatoic mages traditionally have relied upon their own magic and are moderately suspicious of tools. From time to time, however, they accept that the right Artifacts can empower and sustain their guardianship of The Wheel.

**Correspondence:** Black silk ribbon.

**Entropy:** Skull.

**Forces:** Thuggee's scarf.

**Life:** Pomegranate seeds or date pits.

**Matter:** Ashes of an ascetic.

**Mind:** Ruby bindhi.

**Prime:** Sacred flowers harvested at night with a silver dagger.

**Spirit:** Items brought back from the Underworld (or culled from old tombs).

**Time:** Rust.

### **Hollow Ones**

A Hollow One's choice of appropriate components for an Artifact is more personal than Tradition determined, and Sphere correspondences are even more so. The power of the components varies closely with the Hollow One's expectations of their power. One Hollow One may find that a large antique mirror calls out to be turned into an Artifact of some sort while another Hollow One may not get any vibe from it at all and could never make use of it in even a simple spell. Items that have been used successfully in the creation of Hollow One Artifacts include absinthe, black latex, blood, duct tape, glitter, lipstick, leather, spray paint, mirrors, mushrooms, lace, pumpkins, spider silk and high-grade heroin.

### **Order of Hermes**

The one foundation of their approach to Wonder creation that has not changed in the last millennium is alchemy, and while the Order has entire volumes filled with nothing but various substances suitable for use in Artifact creation, the alchemical components remain among the most frequently used.

**Correspondence:** Mercury.

**Entropy:** Lead.

**Forces:** Sulphur.

**Life:** Copper.

**Matter:** Soil gathered by moonlight.

**Mind:** Vinegar or alcohol.

**Prime:** Gold.

**Spirit:** Salt.

**Time:** Fire.

### **Sons of Ether**

The paradigm of the Sons of Ether seems to be one of the most flexible with regard to the ingredients used in Wonders. It helps that the Etherites tend to enjoy tinkering and take great pride in creating their Artifacts from the base components up.

**Correspondence:** 3-D Noögraphical maps and globes and powdered barnacle shell.

**Entropy:** Chloral hydrate or clockwork.

**Forces:** Crystal focusing lenses.

**Life:** Castor oil.

**Matter:** Atomic transducer crystals or specially smelted brass.

**Mind:** Laudanum.

**Prime:** Elemental ether.

**Spirit:** An array of volatile solvents.

**Time:** Tiny springs and gears.

### **Verbena**

So long as science has not completely pushed the natural world into the margins (and the witches are fairly certain it can't), the basic physical components for Verbena Wonders will always be available. The components of Verbena magic, many of which are herbal, predate humanity and they will likely outlast it. The only question is how far a mage will have to travel to harvest these things.

**Correspondence:** Belladonna.

**Entropy:** Toadstools or bones.

**Forces:** Holly berries.

**Life:** Mistletoe or hemlock.

**Matter:** Oak wood.

**Mind:** Henbane, ergot or peyote.

**Prime:** Brine.

**Spirit:** Hawthorn wood or silk cord or rope.

**Time:** A length of fern frond or a handful of seeds.

### **Virtual Adepts**

While the Virtual Adepts have had an easy time of it as far as the components for their Wonders remaining the same, there is one issue that often confounds many of the mages from this Tradition: the frequent need to build their own components. While the Hermetics may complain about carving runes on staves or forging blades from scratch, even taking into account the constant reformulation of Wonder-creation rituals through the centuries, the Virtual Adepts think Hermetics have it easy and insist that engraving a chip of silicon and rare metals — two millimeters to a side — is a much more exacting process. But the debate goes on and will probably never be definitively answered.

**Correspondence:** Connection cables.

**Entropy:** Randomizers.

**Forces:** CPU chips.

**Life:** Medical diagnosis software.

**Matter:** Raw silicon, glass or sand.

**Mind:** Smart drugs or cybernetic neural interfaces.

**Prime:** Electrical current.

**Spirit:** Artificial Intelligence.

**Time:** Sequencers.

## **THE CRAFTING**

Once the mage has determined both the magical and mundane components of her item and foraged for just the right kinds of Tass (with the appropriate Resonance), the time has come for the creation process. For simple objects (one- or two-point Wonders) the creation and enchantments

processes may be one. For more complex items, creation is just an overture to greater and more complex processes.

As with every aspect of Artifact creation, crafting must happen in accordance with the mage's paradigm. Hermetics may craft their items at certain times based on the zodiac (*never* craft an item intended to use a Correspondence Effect when Mercury is in retrograde, weapons are best forged when the full moon is in Scorpio, etc.), while a Verbena witch may want to craft her item at a certain point in her monthly cycle. All nine Traditions (and assorted Crafts) have their own calendars and methods for determining auspicious times for creating Wonders of various types, as well as appropriate places to do so. Some mages may need to have a small army of Acolytes present while others may need for there to be no one in a five-mile radius.

At this point, the mage makes the appropriate Dexterity + Crafts (for Artifacts) or Intelligence + Technology or Computer (for Inventions) rolls. An item that is going to be enchanted needs to be of the highest quality, meaning the mage needs to accumulate a total of 30 successes, with one roll being made for every hour of the mage's dedicated efforts. While the item does not need to be made all at once, the right set of circumstances for working on the item may only come around every so often, so it makes sense that the mage may want to get the thing done all at once.

Once the glass has been blown, the dagger forged, the trinary computer assembled, the nascent Wonder must be kept in a purified environment. Pure, new items like this are like magnets for spirits of all sorts, who would be more than happy to take up residence in such a finely crafted vessel. The mage must keep the bottle wrapped in sanctified silk, the dagger in a rune-encrusted scabbard and the computer must be stored in plastic and Styrofoam in a box until it is time for the next stage of the process.

## THE PURIFICATION

The title of this book refers to an ancient (and, for obvious reasons, no longer used) method of crafting metal Wonders: forging them in the heat of dragon's fire, a process that both purified them and infused them with raw magical power. What few Wonders survive from those ancient days may still contain the sparks of the dragon's power and, if they've survived this long, may well be immune to such trivial phenomena as the shifting of paradigms. They may even ignore Paradox completely, though that would be entirely up to the Storyteller.

The mages who braved the fire of dragons to create their Wonders were thinking in the long term, however, and a modern mage who wants his creations to last must think in the same terms. The preparation and purification rituals that a mage performs over his newly created, and soon to be enchanted, item can impact its ability to withstand the test of time. What does the mage need to do to see to the long-term power and stability of his creation?

Purification rituals are common. Before the raw item undergoes the process of enchantment, it must be made as

perfect as matter can be. In game terms, this might involve using the Prime 2 **Enchant Item** Effect on it three times in a row to make sure that its spiritual reflection is pulling its material form into the proper alignment. Each Tradition will have its own means of doing this. Does the recently blown glass bottle need to be submerged in the waters of a sacred pool? Does a newly forged dagger need to be "soaked" in moonlight for three moons before its temper can be made unbreakable? Does the Chorister's ring need to be blessed in a temple in Jerusalem before the magic will "take"?

Purification or preparation is not a necessary step, although it highlights the multi-step nature of Wonder creation. The item can still be enchanted without this step, but there are consequences: the item won't take the magic as readily, or the magic won't be as inclined to stick in the item. In game terms, the purification process simplifies the enchantment process. The more complex the ritual, the more it brings down the difficulty of the process. A simple purification (letting a silver sword absorb the light of the full moon on three successive nights) will reduce the difficulty by one. A moderately complex preparatory ritual (fasting for a week while chanting prayers to the ancestors) will reduce the difficulty by two and a complex ritual (taking the item on a pilgrimage to a sunken temple in the middle of the Pacific or into the Spirit Lands around the Labyrinth of Knossos) will reduce the difficulty by three.

For the completely berserk die-hard player who wants to actually make the enormously long in-game quest to find and brave the dangers of an actual dragon to get it to breathe on his item to infuse it with power, the difficulty goes down by three *and* the dragon fire prevents magical mishaps (botches count as simple failures and the player can keep rolling instead of starting from scratch). But even getting to that point requires more game sessions than the average chronicle lasts, so it's up to the player to decide if it's really worth all that.

## FLAWS

Wonders can easily eat up all your Background points if you buy them at character creation. Not only do flaws bring down the cost of a Wonder, but they give it "character" as well.

Generally speaking, a minor flaw will bring down the cost of a Wonder by one point, a moderate flaw will bring the cost down by two, and a major flaw that most mages would rather not deal with brings down the cost of a Wonder by three points.

One-point flaws are little more than annoying or odd. Two-point flaws represent a great deal of effort or trouble for the mage and a three-point flaw should be something to give pause to even the most power-hungry willworker.

Examples of one-point flaws include: Works only at night; needs to be fed 10 points of Quintessence before it works; Wonder must be immersed in some odd or expensive substance when not being used (five pounds of vampire ashes, water from an underground lake or sand from the Sahara, for example).

Examples of two-point flaws include: Must make sacrifice of a goat to the item before every use; works only when Mercury

is in retrograde; Wonder must be kept in some very peculiar or expensive substance when not being used (steam-distilled essential oil of rose, a werewolf pelt or human tallow).

Examples of three-point flaws include: Must make a human sacrifice to the item before every use; needs to be fed 40 points of Quintessence before it activates; works only during new moons and eclipses; must be lowered four times a year into the depths of the Marianna Trench; when not used for more than four days, Wonder must be stored someplace that is very difficult to access: the Vatican Library or the deepest temple chamber in Machu Picchu.

Other problems can also be attributed to flaws: A Wonder that works only sporadically has a two-point flaw, for example, while a Wonder that takes a long time to warm up could have a one-point flaw — provided it's sufficiently inconvenient.

The cost of a Wonder can never be brought down by more than three points under any circumstances, but given that the vast majority of Wonders are five points and fewer, that should be more than enough.

## THE QUICKENING

The process of enchantment is commonly called the quickening. It is the moment when the item ceases to be merely a commonplace item and has strings of Fate fastened to it. Mages using Spirit magic Awaken the item at this point while those with Entropy weave in a powerful Destiny.

At this point the mage uses a vulgar Prime 4 Effect and binds in whatever Effects she wants her Wonder to possess. She must be able to cast those Effects to be able to weave them into the Artifact — she cannot add an Entropy 3 Effect if she only knows Entropy 2.

An Artifact's point value is equal to the Sphere ratings of all its Effects; double this total for Artifacts with continuous Effects. Add any optional Paradox handling costs (see p. 10-12) and subtract any Flaw discounts (see above). If the mage has Tass with the proper Resonance, she can use a Prime 3 Effect. Living Artifacts (or any Paradox handling besides mitigating) require Prime 5 (or 4, if the proper Tass is used and the Paradox handling is mitigating only).

She then makes an Arete roll once per hour of dedicated effort, and must accrue successes equal to *twice* the Artifact's point value. She must also spend one Quintessence per success required.

## RESONANCE

The mage's temperament, the Tass used in the creation of the Artifact, the nature and setting of the enchantment process all leave their mark on the new artifact in the form of Resonance. Any of these elements can become the Artifact's overriding Resonance.

Akashic Brothers often take immense pains to make sure that their Wonders do not contain any Resonance at all so that nothing in the item itself interferes with their clear-headed and rational use of their Artifact. Other mages deliberately infuse their

Artifacts with Resonance. Hollow Ones prefer Wonders with Entropic Resonance of the Grim, Dark and Spooky variety. Cultists of Ecstasy, on the other hand, prefer to use items that have Dynamic Resonance of the Aware, Knowing and (of course) Ecstatic types. Virtual Adepts claim that their Techno-Artifacts are more stable and reliable when they have Static Resonance, while Sons of Ether insist that their creative Wonders perform better when they have a pronounced Dynamic Resonance.

What can't be argued is that Resonance can significantly affect how an Artifact works. Three different mages, each with a different Resonance, could follow (more or less) the same formula for creating a flaming sword. The one with Dynamic Resonance would have hot flames that crackle audibly, the one with Entropic Resonance would have a cold-burning black flame and the Static sword would put off more of a pure white heat with faint white flames surrounding the blade.

An Artifact that's in conflict with its own Resonance is in trouble unless the wielder's Resonance counteracts the Wonder's own Resonance in some way. A weapon with Resonance of the Static (Tranquil) type might be beautiful, but it might always suffer a +1 difficulty to actually hit. A healing ring with Entropic (Withering) Resonance may heal the individual who wears it, but steal the health levels from another nearby person or life form. In cases like these, the mage is best served by trying to use the item in the spirit that epitomizes the Resonance he would like the Artifact to take on. Repeatedly using the aforementioned Tranquil sword, for example, in an aggressive manner is a sure way to infuse it with Dynamic Resonance, but it could take a long time. Saying healing prayers while wearing the Withering ring might or might not slowly affect its Resonance, but at the very least it's not likely to damage the ring.

Lastly, the Resonance of an Artifact not only impacts the item's own functions, but it colors how the owner *wants* to use it. An otherwise Dynamic mage might be inclined to use an Entropic Artifact for deceitful, sneaky or questionable uses, and he may get very obsessive about cleaning and shining and taking care of an Artifact with Static Resonance. A mage with the Withering healing ring *could* loan the ring to a wounded ally, but he wouldn't be at all inclined to because of the feelings the ring creates in him.

## SAMPLE ARTIFACTS

Below are some examples of Artifacts. Technomagic hasn't been given equal treatment here, but you can get all the technomagic you could want in **The Technomancer's Toybox**.

Unless noted otherwise, Artifacts are considered to be Paradox Mitigating: any Paradox is garnered by the mage, not the Wonder.

### BOTTLE OF FIRE

#### 5-point Wonder (Paradox Scattering, 10-pt storage)

A squat bottle of red glass standing four-inches high, the bottle of fire appears unremarkable until the brass stopper is removed and the bottle turned upside down (and the user's player

rolls Arete, difficulty 7). At that point, a hot-burning liquid pours out of the bottle and moves away from the user at a rate of one foot per turn. As it moves, the fire causes all flammable items in its path to burst into flame. When the mage has caused enough destruction, he need only replace the stopper.

Living creatures take damage as they would from a Rank 4 Forces Effect.

The bottle can take a great deal more punishment than a mundane glass bottle, but a really solid blow (especially by a Prime-charged weapon) will shatter a bottle of fire, causing an explosion dealing 10 dice of aggravated damage to everyone in a 10-foot radius of the exploding bottle.

The bottle is filled with the very essence of fire. There are rumors of Fetish versions of this Artifact that hold fire elementals.

## THE CHAINS OF LEVIATHAN

**6-point Wonder (Paradox Scattering, 10-pt storage)**

More than most Tradition mages, the Hollow Ones are inspired by mainstream culture, horror movies in particular. When one talented Hollower saw the Hellraiser movies in the early '90s, he knew he had to have those kick-ass chains that Pinhead used. After several years of working on his Prime, Correspondence and Matter skills, he finally got them.

This Artifact appears to be a black belt of heavy chain connected by smaller chains to two rings. The mage that puts it on finds that four lengths of the Chains of Leviathan are at his command; they can be willed to shoot out of any dark shadow within the mage's line of sight. To hit a target, roll Arete (difficulty 7). If the mage wants to hit with more than one chain per turn, he suffers a -1 die pool penalty for each extra chain used.

The lengths of chain end in barbed, Prime-charged iron hooks that deliver aggravated damage (one point per success on the Arete roll). If more than three lengths hit a single target, there's a 50% chance that the chains will be able to rip the target into pieces (roll a 10-sided die and if it comes up six or more, the target takes three Health Levels of aggravated damage for each chain that's hooked into him).

Using the Chains of Leviathan counts, unsurprisingly, as intensely vulgar magic.

## CAULDRON OF SPIES

**4-point Wonder (Paradox Accruing, 10-pt storage)**

The cauldron of spies is a Verbena Artifact par excellence. The mage needs only fill the cauldron with water and bring it to an energetic boil and then speak the right words (rolling Arete, difficulty 7) and out of the water



will shoot a number of bats (if it's night) or rooks (if it's daylight). These animals are connected to the mage telepathically, and whatever they see, she sees. These creatures have a range of several miles from the mage and they last for 12 hours, at which point they dive into the nearest, deepest shadow and fade away (so that they can't be followed back to the witch who created them).

## THE DIVINE STAFF OF FORTUITOUS INTERVENTION

### 2-point Wonder

This defensive Artifact looks like nothing more than a four-foot staff carved from a fine-grained white wood.

In combat, however, the divine staff of fortuitous intervention is a wonder to behold as it whirls in the hands of the mage wielding it, blocking, parrying and deflecting all manner of blows and weapons fire, including crossbow bolts, bullets and particle beams. The mage may make a reflexive ("free") action to roll Arete (difficulty 5); each success is added to those used to Dodge or block any incoming attack. The mage can also make such a roll and add his successes to any Athletics Ability successes.

## DREAM SPIRIT BAG

### 2-point Wonder

This ornamental bag is covered with beautiful beads and it is full of sleep. When the mage wants a target to fall asleep, he simply blows a handful of sleep at his target. The player rolls Arete against a difficulty of the target's temporary Willpower rating; one success causes the target to become drowsy, gaining a +2 modifier to the difficulty of all rolls. Two successes cause the target to slip into a deep, relaxing sleep for at least two hours and as many as 12.

## GREAT SIGIL PENDANT

### 3-point Wonder

Dealing with Umbrood as often as they do, the mages of the Houses of Hermes have, of necessity, developed some potent Artifacts to give them the upper hand in their spirit dealings. The great sigil pendant is a disk of steel around three inches in diameter engraved with a complex magical glyph. Umbrood within 10 feet of the great sigil pendant suffer a -3 dice penalty on all actions.

The great sigil pendant works both in the material world and in the world of spirits. Some Hermetic pendants affect only astral spirits, although most of *these* are based, to some degree or other, on the Greater Key of Solomon. Consequently, the Taftani also use these Artifacts, although they also have a version that affects only djinn.

## MADAME XANADU'S ALL-SEEING FORTUNE MACHINE

### 4-point Wonder

No one knows whether to attribute creation of this Artifact to the Sons of Ether, the Euthanatoi or the Hollow Ones, but it's a fascinating (if somewhat awkward and clunky) device.

Madame Xanadu is a clockwork fortuneteller in a glass booth. When a mage puts a coin in the Artifact's slot (and rolls Arete against a difficulty of 6), Madame Xanadu comes to life and tells the querent to think deeply on the nature of his concern. At that point, she says, "I see how this will work out for you," and a printed ticket shoots from a slot with an enigmatic 10-word phrase. The odd thing is, the advice is always right, but answer tends to be a little veiled.

When one newly Awakened mage happened upon Madame Xanadu after running away from home, his ticket read: "Control rules the age. Hide your talents. Find Simon Blaze." Simon Blaze, in that case, turned out to be a mage of the same Tradition as the nascent mage.

To a mage fighting a powerful Nephandus, Madame Xanadu might say: "When the shadow is lured into the light, it fades."

Madame Xanadu has been known to give addresses and telephone numbers to those in need (and while she's always right, the people she refers mages to are always surprised to hear where the recommendation came from). It has happened, once or twice in her history, that Madame Xanadu has spit out crisp \$100 bills instead of tickets — if that's what the querent most needed. And Madame Xanadu *always* knows what the querent needs most.

## PERSONALITY SOFTWARE

### 2-point Wonder

Used by Virtual Adepts and other computer-savvy technomancers capable of downloading information directly to their brains, personality software allows a mage to temporarily replace his own personality with a downloaded one. This temporary personality can be that of a generic type — e.g., "the professor," "the vampire," "the bitter cynic," "the gracious philanthropist" — or a specific, real individual — "Man in White Thomas Irving Brown" "Sebastian Cromwell, vampire." The software allows the user to mimic exactly a target's speech patterns, gestures, sartorial proclivities, eating habits and even sense of humor. Personality software does not change the user's appearance in any way, but with the right AI enhanced vocoder, he could fool even the target's mother in a phone call, and with the right transformative magic he could replace the target with no one being the wiser.

Personality software does not impart knowledge that the user cannot otherwise know (e.g., passwords, memories of an old friend or the whereabouts of the secret base).

The main problem with personality software, however, is that the mimic's native personality is at odds with the artificial personality. The more diametrically opposed the artificial personality, the sooner the clash will come to a head. Once the assumed personality has been in place for its maximum duration, as listed in the chart below, the mimic begins having extremely bad migraine headaches. The day after the headaches begin, the mimic's Willpower begins to drop by one point per day. When the mimic reaches zero Willpower, he believes that he is the person he is imitating. Things go rapidly downhill from there.

Similarity	Maximum Personality Duration
Very similar/could be brothers	1 Month
Somewhat similar	3 weeks
Somewhat different	2 weeks
Very different	1 week
Diametrically opposed	1 day

All that is required to shrug off the effects of personality software is to expend 1 temporary Willpower point.

Any AI can create generic personality software, but creating personality software that effectively mimics a real individual requires the detailed analysis of several hours worth of surveillance footage of the person to be copied.

## PROFESSOR GUNDERLEE'S ETHER TRACKING CLOCKWORK WONDER GLOBE

### 8-point Wonder (Paradox Randomization)

A beautiful three-dimensional clockwork model of the earth made from polished brass and beautiful peacock-blue glass, the wonder globe portrays, with points of lights and auras above the globe's surface, the real-time flow of ether and meta-magical events across the face of the planet. More amazing still, the wonder globe can fast forward or rewind to reveal where shallowings have occurred or will be occurring. Different colors pop up and hover above the face of the wonder globe to indicate different etheric phenomena: electric blue indicates a shallowing, gold points represent Nodes, rose lights indicate a Node claimed by shapechangers, silver-gray points indicate Nodes that have been sterilized by the Technocracy and violet-green points indicate Nodes that have been, by whatever means, tainted or corrupted.

Professor Gunderlee keeps his wonder globe an absolute secret, although it pains him horribly to do so. He hasn't even mentioned it in any of his frequent contributions to *Paradigma* even though he constructed it nearly two decades ago. His uncharacteristic discretion is based on two factors: First, if any member of the Changing Breeds were to discover that he knew the whereabouts of *every single one* of their Caerns, they would spare no effort to kill him and steal (or destroy) the wonder globe. Secondly, Professor Gunderlee knows that the Technocracy would *love* to have such an amazing Invention (he happens to know that they've been trying to build a similar item for years but can't quite make it work). For him, watching the changing flow of magic across the planet is a pastime, and the Invention itself a triumph of magical achievement and a thing of beauty. To tell even one other person about his magnum opus device would be to imperil the last vestiges of rationality and goodness known to mankind.

In the very core of the Invention is a complex self-destruct mechanism that will blast the thing to atoms should any of a certain set of conditions (including his death) ever be met.

Many of the brilliant Professor Gunderlee's other, more martial, Inventions are used to guard the mansion where he keeps the wonder globe.

The viewer of this amazing Invention need only roll her Arete (difficulty 7) to see and understand what the map reveals. If the viewer fails, she is simply unable to focus on the lights with enough clarity to make sense of the globe; she has a vague sense of the shimmering colors and points, but her eyes can't seem to focus on them enough to make the item useful.

## SERPENT PEN

### 7-point Wonder (Paradox Accruing, 10-pt storage)

Serpent pens are relatively sophisticated assassination tools for use against individuals who are otherwise too well guarded. These Artifacts look like green or golden pens, but aside from that they vary a great deal. Some have an ornate scale pattern down the length of the barrel while others are relatively plain.

The pen is somehow slipped into pocket or bag of the target. When the target has forgotten about the pen, it transforms into a small, highly poisonous snake and bites the target when he's sleeping, delivering a whopping 6 Health Levels of aggravated damage. Once the pen's objective has been carried out, it gets lost and in a few days (when things have calmed down a bit) it makes its way back to its master.

While the Euthanatos don't use serpent pens as much these days, there was a time around the middle of the 20th century when they comprised a major weapon in the death mages' arsenal.

## SLIP-REX, THE KING OF LUBRICANTS

### 1-point Wonder

A mainstay in the tool chests of almost every Son of Ether, Slip-Rex comes in a simple, old-fashioned oil-squirter can with a yellow-and-blue label. Any surface touched by Slip-Rex becomes completely frictionless. Anyone standing will immediately lose her balance, and once on the floor, she cannot get up unless she has some means of getting out of the slippery patch.

When the can of Slip-Rex (the can is the Artifact) starts getting empty, the mage (usually a Son of Ether) simply refills the can with any oil (baby oil, olive oil, Penzoil 40 weight) and rolls Arete (difficulty 4), transforming the oil into Slip-Rex, the King of Lubricants.

Enterprising Sons of Ether have made a similar kind of Artifact out of a grease gun, and it can be refilled with anything from axle grease to Crisco.

## SPACE JAM

### 1-point Wonder

As masters of Correspondence, Virtual Adepts know a thing or two about surveillance. One thing they know is how easy it is to monitor the ground from spy satellites. Space jam is the name given to an Invention that blocks satellites from picking up anything in a 10-foot radius of the wrist unit in which it's carried. Adepts explain that the space jam unit does what it does by amplifying natural environmental interference overhead, but the upshot is that all surveillance camera footage is blurry, warped and completely useless for any purpose. The



kind of interference it generates is even relatively common, so Technocrats can't even necessarily assume that there's a mage anywhere they find this kind of interference.

## SPIRITUAL ARMOR

### 10-point Wonder

Combat is really not a Celestial Chorister's specialty (although Templars are just as likely to use this Artifact as Choristers), but there are times when it becomes necessary. The mage puts on this fine mesh armor before going into battle and receives a number of benefits for doing so:

- Spiritual armor provides three extra soak dice without causing a movement penalty.
- While she's wearing the armor, it radiates soft golden sunlight. For most mages this is just a matter of convenience, but when the mage is battling vampires, that glow is the equivalent of direct sunlight to such creatures and damages such opponents from up to 40 feet.
- Her Willpower is effectively increased to 10 for purposes of all mind control magic.
- She gains 5 automatic successes on all defensive rolls against attacks by Umbrood.

- She gains five *additional* dice to her Dodge pool.

The main problem with spiritual armor is the glow, which, under most circumstances, is likely to bring Paradox down on the wearer.

Spiritual armor can only be repaired in a place of great holiness, like a cathedral or consecrated Node.

## TRANCE DRUM

### 2-point Wonder (Paradox Randomization)

Used primarily by Ecstatics, the trance drum allows anyone familiar with trance states to enter one after just a few drum beats. Trance drums have a hollow, resonant and deeply pleasing tone to them when struck and effectively make it easy to shrug off conscious thought for as long as anyone is playing.

Any mage who needs to achieve a trance state can do so at a difficulty of 3 while the drum is being played. The Tradition mages who normally benefit from this Artifact are the Cultists, Dreamspeakers and Verbena. Some Craft mages (including Bata'a voodoo and Polynesian kahunas) will also benefit from the pulsing beat of the trance drum. Magic from those paradigms is performed at a -1 difficulty while the trance drum is being played.

Sleepers (and other non-mages) are more susceptible to suggestion and Subterfuge in the presence of a beating trance drum, and rolls of that kind (as well as all Mind magic performed on such targets) are made at a -2 to the difficulty.

A drummer with three or more dots in Performance can manipulate an audience with one of these Artifacts. A slow, sensual rhythm will seduce a small audience (15 or fewer people) into an orgy within the space of an hour, while a fast, aggressive beat will result in violent fights breaking out in an equal length of time.

## WOUND-BEARING TORC

### 4-point Wonder (Paradox Accruing, 10-pt storage)

Wound bearers come in a number of different forms (including pendants, arm bands, belts and rings); torcs are simply the most frequently found form of this Artifact.

Once common among Celtic and Norse magi, wound bearers absorb the first 10 Health Levels of damage a mage takes in battle and (assuming the mage survives the battle) slowly returns the wounds to the mage at the rate of one per day beginning the next morning.

If another mage removes the torc from its wearer and puts it on himself, the torc will immediately assign all remaining wounds to the new wearer all at once.

# CHARITIS & GADGETS



## THE NATURE OF CHARITIS AND GADGETS

En route to learning the secrets of crafting more miraculous Wonders, most mages with an affinity for creation will begin with the simplest type of Wonder: Charms (called Gadgets by Technomancers).

Charms are simple one-shot Wonders, relatively cheap and easy mystical ephemera that, while only useful once, can have immense power and, under the right circumstances, can be exactly what a mage needs.

Most mages see charms as being at the opposite end of the Wonder spectrum from Talismans. They are not so much physical items imbued for all time with mystical qualities as they are magical Effects temporarily held in place with a physical anchor. Some mages “hang” a spell using the Time or Entropy Spheres, while others “hang” their Effects on physical items, the process whereby the item becomes a Charm. When the Charm’s material shell is destroyed, through burning, breaking, digestion or other form of destruction, the Effect is loosed into the world. The magical Effect held in an enchanted candle, for example, slowly wriggles free of its wax anchor bit by bit as the candle burns away, while a firecracker Charm releases its magic in a single pop. The process of digestion triggers magical elixirs, while simply being exposed to air is enough to free the magic from unguents, oils and salves.

Charms can be indispensable to a mage needing a little magical backup. Some mages (notably the mages of Hermetic House Solificati, and their more independent brethren, the Children of Knowledge) do a great portion of their magic through Charms in the form of magical pastilles, elixirs, powders and salves. By performing all their magic in advance (during the process of Charm creation), these mages have a means of quickly accessing a reliable form of magic that is less susceptible to the vicissitudes of fate.

Some items are powerfully receptive to magic — they hold magic unusually well, resonate with a particular mystic energy, or they might even be Tass themselves, but they are too small or fragile

## STALE MAGIC

Magic is slippery. Charms can only hold their Effects for so long, and after a while, the magic begins to weaken. While a mage may know what kind of durability he crafted into his own Charms, those Charms that his mentor bequeathed to him or those that he found in a chest beneath the stairs should be suspect.

Charms that have begun to go stale may only have a fraction of their usual power, while those that have lost their magic entirely won’t function at all. How this manifests is up to the Storyteller, but it’s a good way to keep players from growing complacent.

A mage has full control over the stability of the Charms he creates. When creating the Charm, the mage can put extra successes into the object to make it hold its Effect more firmly.

Note that mages who intend to use their newly fashioned Charms immediately need not worry about this at all. Even without spending any extra successes on durability, a Charm will hold its charge for at least three months.

That said, many of the Charms a mage might run across, especially in Asia, where Charms are more popular than in the Western world, might be at the end of their “shelf life” and could be suspect.

Successes	Charm Good For
-	3 months
1	1 year
2	5 years
3	10 years
4	25 years
5	100 years
6	Never goes bad

to be made into Talismans in their own right. However, while these items may not possess the durability or substance necessary for an Artifact or a Talisman, they're perfect for Charms and Gadgets. Examples of these sorts of items include enchanted candles, boxes of magical matches, magical arrows, a bouquet of enchanted flowers, a pomegranate filled with magical seeds, a jawbone full of enchanted teeth, a basket of magical eggs (perhaps containing souls stolen from the Underworld that are freed when the egg is broken and do battle for their creator) and similar small Wonders.

The general rule when creating Charms and Gadgets is that it's best to use items that have strong resonance but that are too delicate or ephemeral for them to be turned into other Wonders. This also adds variety to the types of Wonders in your game and maintains the freshness of these things of power.

Children of Knowledge and members of House Solificati are not the only mages who specialize in ready-made magic. Charm and Gadget users could easily be thought of as an entire sub-class of mage. A Verbena herbalist could carry around bottles of salves, decoctions and tinctures while the Iteration X agent could have an entire just-in-case case full of a variety of utilitarian Gadgets.

Tied as they are to Foci, Technocrats are more likely to benefit from ample use of Gadgets. Their magic is only as good as their tools, so they have more motivation to make the best use possible of items on hand.

Tradition mages, on the other hand, do not labor under the same limitations, but Charms still provide access to relatively quick and reliable magic that, especially for low-Arete mages, can be a lifesaver.

## USING CHARMS AND GADGETS

There are as many ways of using Charms as there are types of Charms themselves. The mage fires the magical bullet, lights the pastille or anoints himself with the unguent. The magical Effects of the Charm will begin either immediately or on the following turn, at the Storyteller's discretion.

Charms and Gadgets are unique among Wonders in that they don't require an Arete roll when using them; the

Charms' creator made the Arete rolls during the construction of the Charm. Using a Charm is in essence like using a delayed reaction Effect. The magic inheres in the Charm until such time as the user sees fit to release it.

One need not be Awakened to use Charms or Gadgets, *but* generally only consors and Acolytes ever do so. A Sleeper who believes in the magic's paradigm can trigger the magic in a Charm by spending a point of Willpower, while a Sleeper whose disbelief would invoke Paradox cannot.

Both the player and the Storyteller need to keep careful records of all the Charms in play. The Storyteller should have a master list of the characters' Charms, which should include information on Effect, number of successes scored in its creation, "expiration date" and how many Charms of a particular type each character possesses. Both the player and the Storyteller must be extremely careful to mark off when a character uses up a Charm.

## PARADOX HANDLING

Charms can be considered Paradox mitigating (see p. 10) in certain circumstances (Storyteller choice). However, they can possess no other Paradox handling ability (they cannot accrue, absorb, randomize or scatter Paradox).

## CRAFTING CHARMS AND GADGETS

Charms are easier to craft than other Artifacts or Talismans, but that doesn't mean they're child's play. Since Charms don't need to last beyond their given number of charges, the mage need not be concerned with the issue of permanency, which is one of the more difficult issues involved in creating Wonders. By taking permanence out of the equation, the creation of Charms becomes an undertaking possible by even a newly Awakened mage, although it still involves an extended magical working.

Creating a Charm follows the same formula as creating an Artifact, but since the mage is simply temporarily binding magic in a physical vessel and not permanently imbuing an item with mystical power, it requires one less degree of skill with Prime, so:

— Using Tass with the appropriate Resonance allows a mage to create a simple Charm using only Prime 2.

— Using any old source of Quintessence to craft a Charm requires Prime 3. Likewise, a mage using Prime 3 can make a living Charm (a plant with a number of magical flowers or fruits, a sacrificial animal whose death releases some magical Effect, etc.) provided she uses Tass with the appropriate Resonance.

— Lacking appropriate Tass, a mage can use a living thing to hold an Effect with Prime 4.

The mage has to determine what inherent qualities of the item she wants to enhance, enchant or invert. She achieves these qualities through Sphere Effects (as with Artifacts, she must be able to cast these Effects herself).

### WHO USES THESE THINGS?

Besides the aforementioned Solificati and Children of Knowledge, Charms are most commonly used by Virtual Adepts (in the form of one-shot software, disposable ICE breakers and auxiliary brain modules), Sons of Ether (who *love* Gadgets of all description), Verbena brew masters, Wu Lung alchemists (who have long had a fascination with Charms and frequently use them as toys for children and teaching instruments for initiates) and the Taftani mages of Arabia and Asia who are known to "weave" their destructive magics into any number of items, such as hand-blown glass bottles, or poems mystically inscribed on camel-hide that burst into flames once their Effects have been triggered by reading them aloud.

Charm creation requires the same kind of extended ritual and Quintessence cost as the creation of an Artifact; the mage needs to accumulate a number of successes equal to twice the point value of the Charm.

The point value is equal to half (round up) the highest Sphere Effect or power the Charm recreates, plus one per extra Sphere involved (round the final amount down). For example, the Thanatoic mage Vijaya Holmes wants to create Unbullets (see p. 31). This requires a conjunctive Entropy 4, Life 3 Effect. Hence, Unbullets are 3-point Charms. The Storyteller, however, is free to raise or lower the point cost, depending on how valuable he judges the Charm's effectiveness.

Conveniently, however, a mage may make a number of Charms (of the same type) in one batch — up to twice his Arete in one batch. For example, Vijaya Holmes has an Arete of 4, and so can make up to 8 Unbullets at one time.

Given the power of Charms, they must be created during game time. For reasons of game balance, it is not acceptable for a player to say, "My character cooked up several batches of healing potion between last game and this game." If a character needs to stay back at the chantry for a day while his cohorts go out and fight for Ascension, so be it. Spontaneous and dependable magic does not come cheaply.

As with any Wonder, the mage should begin with the best Tass possible and the highest quality components. If appropriate, the mage should ritually cleanse the materials to be used.

## MATERIALS

As stated, the ideal materials for Charms and Gadgets are those that have ample magical potential but that are too ephemeral to be crafted into more permanent Wonders.

Small items with great symbolic or folkloric value are primed for use as Charms. Pomegranate seeds are a symbol of death and the underworld, eggs are a symbol of life and the soul. DVDs represent the ability to store large quantities of information. Bullets represent death while drugs represent temporary madness and forbidden knowledge.

The best results are obtained with more nearly perfect items. Store-bought thyme will never yield the same results as thyme grown by the witch herself in her magic herb garden.

## FLAWS

A lazy mage might cut corners here or there in the creation of a Charm. Maybe she really doesn't want to go all the way to Australia for eucalyptus leaves when she has a eucalyptus tree in her back yard (even though the formula specifically calls for *Australian* eucalyptus leaves). Maybe she can't bear the thought of pulling the fangs from a living vampire, so she uses the ashes of a dead one that were, more or less, in the area where the fangs would have been. The fact of the matter is that magic is, to a degree, flexible, but magical formulae are designed around ideals, and deviating from those formulae can have serious consequences in the finished product. Sometimes the mage can get away with second-rate

## CANDLE MAGIC: THE DEVIL IS IN THE DETAILS

Candles are particularly good vehicles for Charms whose Effects manipulate light, fire, shadows, ghosts or spirits, but the mage making such charms must choose the ingredients of his Charm carefully or he'll suffer the consequences later.

The vast majority of candles available are made of paraffin. Paraffin candles, while easy to obtain, do not hold magic well. Paraffin is a highly distilled petroleum product, tainted by the procedures involved in reclaiming it from the crude oil of which it was originally a part. They also release mildly harmful byproducts into the air when burned. Since it has been so heavily processed, a mage can never be sure (without using magic) what kind of Resonance a paraffin candle may have picked up in its extensive processing.

Wisely, mages who make candle Charms generally eschew paraffin candles entirely and use one of the following types:

Beeswax candles are by far the best for most magical purposes. They burn hot and slowly and smell mildly of honey. Beeswax candles are especially well suited to creating Charms that affect light, spirits (especially insect and technology spirits), fire and wealth, or those that use the Life or Mind Spheres.

Bayberry candles are made from the leaves and fruits of an American shrub. They produce a pleasant smell when lit and are particularly well suited for Effects involving plant spirits or fertility.

Tallow candles are made from the rendered fat of animals. They are especially well suited to Effects involving shadows, necromancy, animal spirits or the Sphere of Entropy. Nephandi particularly prize candles made from human tallow, and use them to create the darkest Charms known to humanity.

ingredients; other times such choices come back to haunt her in the form of flaws in her Charms.

Flaws can take any number of forms ranging from unusually shortened duration (a Charm whose Effect should last a whole scene instead lasts only five minutes), physical side effects (an elixir that imparts the ability to breathe under water may also cause the user's skin to grow slimy like a fish's — with all the problems that entails — or it may cause the drinker to be unable to breathe out of water until the potion wears off), to functioning less effectively (a woad paste intended to render the mage completely bullet-proof simply increases her soak pool by one die).

Flaws otherwise work the same as they do for Artifacts, lowering the point cost by -1, -2, or -3.

One advantage of flawed Charms is that they're more readily available. No mage really *wants* to use a flawed Charm, and so the more flawed Charms are frequently less difficult to come by. The question then becomes how much unpleasantness a mage is prepared to experience in the pursuit of a magical bargain.

## RESONANCE

Being a relatively ephemeral form of Wonder, Charms and Gadgets don't suffer the effects of Resonance as much as more solid Wonders like Artifacts and Talismans.

Charms created by a mage with unusually strong Resonance of a particular sub-type (Angry Dynamic Resonance, for example) may show some signs of that. A candle Charm crafted by a mage with Dynamic Resonance might burn more brightly than one made by a mage with strong Deathly Entropic Resonance.

Beyond that, the magic used in Charms and Gadgets is so fleeting and shallow that it doesn't color the Effects of the Wonder to any strong degree.

## SAMPLE CHARITIS CLAY MAN AMULET

### 5-point Wonder

Among the most coveted Charms created by the Dreamspeakers are clay man amulets.

The clay man is a small, human-shaped, brightly decorated clay figurine worn on a cord around the neck. Anyone wanting to get the protective benefits of a clay man amulet must attune it to himself by anointing it with his own blood or semen. Once anointed, the clay man becomes a powerful protective charm. The next five times the character takes damage (while wearing the amulet), the clay man absorbs the wound in its entirety. This includes wounds brought about by physical combat, poison and magic. Each wound causes one of the clay man's limbs to crumble to dust. With the fifth and final wound, the head of the clay man crumbles and the Charm is destroyed.

Clay man amulets require a complex Matter 3, Life 3, Spirit 4, Entropy 3 Effect to create and are thus exceedingly hard to come by. Dreamspeakers powerful enough to make clay men are unlikely to give them to any but those who have helped them in important ways. Randomly finding a clay man amulet that hasn't yet been anointed is about as common as picking up a winning lottery ticket off the street.

Most individuals possessing a clay man amulet refrain from wearing it until they're about to enter a dangerous situation where they expect to take serious damage.

An individual trying to wear more than one clay man loses the benefits of all of them.

## EBON CANDLES OF MANIFEST NIGRESCENCE

### 3-point Wonder

These dark charms were originally created by a cabal of Hollow Ones wanting to secure their sanctum from sneaky

Technocratic spies. Ebon candles of manifest nigrescence have two main Effects when lit: They dim all conventional light sources in the target area to a quarter of their standard luminescence while simultaneously producing harsh gray light that both deepens and thickens all shadows in the target area, giving the shadows a degree of tangibility. The hungry shadows snuff small flames, including matches, cigarettes and other candles within the target area.

Shadows in the target area coalesce into cold, tangible masses that muffle sound and hinder movement. Anyone caught in one of these shadows (i.e., anyone not within three clear feet of a strong light source) has to fight to breathe through the clotted darkness; those with a Strength of one — including children under the age of 10 and all animals smaller than a large dog — will suffocate (as per **Mage** page 249) unless they get to a light source or leave the target area. Movement rates are halved. Vision is blurred and sounds are muted or distorted beyond understanding. Perception rolls made by those in the shadows are made at +3 difficulty.

The target area is one complete floor of any building in which one lights one of the candles. A full ebon candle of manifest nigrescence burns for approximately eight hours, although the candle need not be burned all at once.

## GINGER DRAGONS

### 2-point Wonder

These chewy, dragon-shaped ginger candies are rare everywhere although they seem to be a little easier to come by in China. They are normally found in cellophane bags of five, although single ginger dragons and partial bags are more common than full bags. A full bag of ginger dragons is a rare treasure.

They are rumored to be made by a handful of old Wu Lung mages, and some Akashic Brothers have reported that they can even be bought in market stalls in some remote, rural parts of the country.

Ginger dragons come in bright red and yellow wrappers covered with hand-lettered Chinese characters describing the majesty and power of the great dragons. Characters fluent in Chinese will note that the script is an older, almost archaic form of Chinese.

To use a ginger dragon, the character pops the candy in her mouth and begins chewing. The next turn, the character is able to breathe fire. These flames extend 10 feet and do five dice of aggravated damage to targets caught in the blast.

While very useful and effective, ginger dragons come at a cost: They are extremely hot (as in spicy), causing the character's eyes to tear up and making him sweat profusely. While the character is not wounded per se, he suffers a wound penalty as though he were hurt (as per the Health Level, i.e., -1) for the rest of the scene or until he's able to drink a large glass of water or juice.

## GODSPIN BLØTTER ACID

### 4-point Wonder

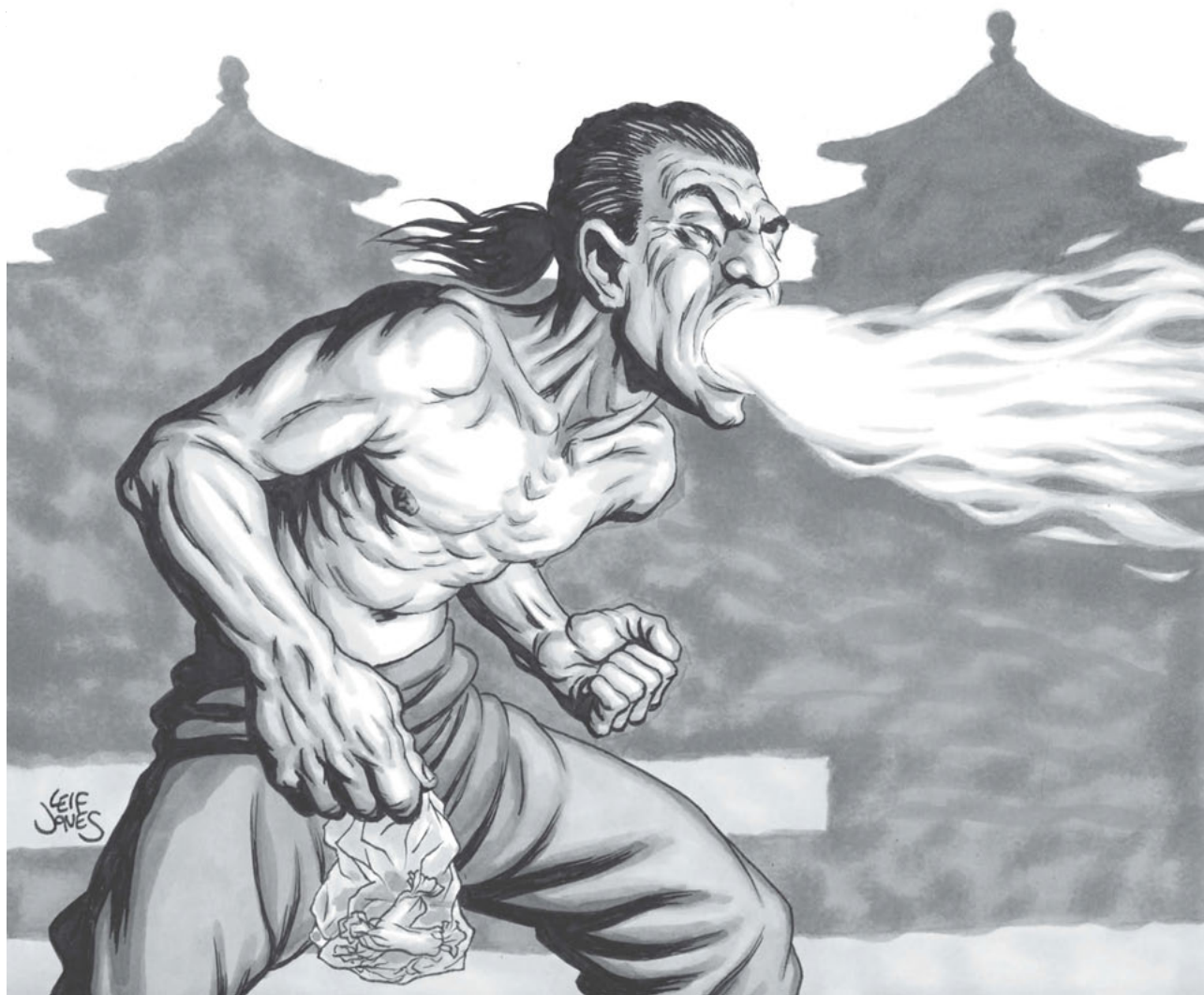
A tab of GODSPIN looks like nothing more than a 7mm square piece of vaguely yellow paper with the tiny numbers 1, 9, 7 and 3 appearing in elegant Desdemona print in the corners. Skeptics have suggested that the number simply indicates the year in which some enterprising black market alchemist brewed the legendary batch of GODSPIN, but others claim that the numbers on the tab are the four digits in God's PIN, which is to say, the key to the universe.

Cultists of Ecstasy trip on GODSPIN when they need major insights into a problematic situation that they can't get in any other way.

The user puts the tab of GODSPIN under her tongue and waits. About 30 minutes later, she'll begin to notice the initial onset of hallucinations: streamers like comet tails trailing behind moving objects, breathing walls and similar (if unremarkable) hallucinatory phenomena. After about half an hour of preliminaries, the real Effects of GODSPIN kick in. The tripper notices patterns moving all around her; anything in her vicinity with a pattern on it, whether it's the

plants around her or the flight of the birds outside her window — reveals, with crisp and lucid clarity, a hint of a larger pattern. This pattern-sensing Effect extends outward from the mage at an amazing rate like a billowing cloud of awareness. Within the space of an hour, her senses extend out across the globe and she is able to see patterns within patterns within patterns and, most amazingly, they all make perfect sense. At that point, the tripper is able to focus on the patterns salient to her specific situation. Patterns of activity, money flow and emotion all become clear, as do currents of fate and the flow of destiny. Those channels or individuals involved in any way with the tripper's concerns — wherever they may be — become highlighted in the pattern. In this way runaways or criminals can be found, conspiracies can be rooted out and the whereabouts of missing items can be clearly discerned.

While the Correspondence 3, Entropy 3, Mind 3 Effect behind this flicker of "cosmic awareness" is relatively simple, it's also phenomenally powerful. The tripper *must* record her perceptions while she's tripping (or have someone else record them for her if she's too out of it), because all recollection of her amazing awareness disappears once she comes down.



Six to eight hours after the onset of hallucinations, the Effects of GODSPIN subside, leaving the tripper feeling haggard and moderately zombified.

GODSPIN carries a very heavy body load (that is to say, it's hard on the user) and the tripper suffers one level of bashing damage and will feel like crap for a day or so after coming down, during which time the difficulties of all Mental rolls are at +1.

Real GODSPIN is hard to find, and only one or two tabs are likely to show up at any given time; consequently, those who run across any save it until they really need it.

## SALVATION BELL

### 3-point Wonder

These Charms, in the shape of small brass bells, protect their user from those who would harm her at night. When a salvation bell is struck, it radiates a warm golden light. Once the bell begins to glow, the ringer begins praying, chanting or singing in harmony with the ringing tone of the bell. So long as this prayer continues, the chime of the bell does not fade and the singer's enemies are unable to get within 10 feet of her. Furthermore, for each voice singing in harmony with the bell, the radius of protection is increased by 10 feet. If the singer attempts to do anything else besides sing (e.g., walk, read, fire a gun) the spell is broken and the bell cracks.

The salvation bell does not keep the attacker at bay with a wall of force or anything so blatant; it simply renders him unable to bring himself any closer. Salvation bells work only from sundown until 10 minutes after dawn, after which their magic is depleted (although they can be re-enchanted). A salvation bell used to keep out particularly powerful or evil enemies might crack once its magic is gone, preventing re-enchantment.

Note that while the salvation bell keeps assailants 10 feet away, it does not prevent the assailant from firing a gun or throwing a knife at the singer or otherwise interfering in the song.

The Mind 3, Prime 2, Forces 2 Effect that powers salvation bells is not a difficult one. Salvation bells are almost always found in groups of three.

## SEEDS OF DECAY

### 6-point Wonder

Immensely powerful and hard to find, seeds of decay return unnatural things to the natural cycle of life. "Unnatural things" in this case covers everything from computers to spent uranium to cars to vampires. A handful of seeds is enough to return 12 cubic feet of substance back to the earth from which it came, however distantly.

The user simply throws a handful of seeds on the target and within a minute, the seeds sprout, draining Quintessence from the pattern of the thing they're decaying and rechanneling it and rendering it into simple loam. In the case of vampires, the seeds do two levels of aggravated damage per turn of contact if the target fails to Dodge. In the space of a few

minutes, the seeds sprout into hardy vines, usually morning glory, but sometimes kudzu or ivy. Not only do the seeds transform the physical shell of the object, but its spirit as well, preventing the spirit from pulling the object back out of accord with Nature.

Once the seeds have germinated and the vines are grown, there is nothing magic about them; the vines are completely mundane, and once they live out their span, they will wither and die.

The enormously complex Effect used to create seeds of decay (Life 5, Matter 3, Prime 5, Spirit 4, Time 3) is known only to a small handful of mages still on Earth, all but one of which are Verbena.

A full pouch of seeds usually contains enough for two to four uses.

## SPRATT AND DABBET'S LIGHTER-THAN-AIR MASTICATED CONVEYANCE GEL

### 3-point Wonder

Conveyance gel appears as a pink (or sometimes green) lump of soft putty about the size of the last segment of your thumb. When chewed, the conveyance gel mixes with saliva to form a strange gas that possesses a quarter of the atomic density of hydrogen, making it much lighter than air. When the chewer blows a good sized bubble with the conveyance gel, the bubble lifts him off the ground and, in the absence of any prevailing winds, drifts vaguely in whichever direction the chewer is most forcefully thinking about.

Bubbles made of conveyance gel are much sturdier than mere bubble gum and will not pop unless aggressively assailed by a sharp object (awls, razor blades, eagle talons and blow torches have proven effective at breaching conveyance gel bubbles, while fingers, bo staves and hurled footwear have not).

Spratt and Dabbet closely guard the Matter 3, Forces 2 formula behind the conveyance gel, but any Son of Ether worth his goggles should be able to reverse engineer its secrets with a little effort (Intelligence + Enigmas, difficulty 8) so long as he has a sample to work with. One may obtain conveyance gel directly from its inventors (if one can track them down), but it is more common to discover it in packs of eight pieces.

## SPIRITUS PASTILLE

### 2-point Wonder

A pastille is a small tablet that smolders and emits thick, often fragrant, smoke when lit. For Hermetic mages, especially those of House Solificati, pastilles are a common form of working magic. Pastilles usually come in groups of one to four in small metal tins.

When lit, the spiritus pastille emits a fragrant gray smoke that smells strongly of cloves and patchouli oil.

The smoke of a spiritus pastille has three effects: it reveals ghosts, attracts ghosts to the smoky area, and reveals the general inclinations of the ghosts.

Not only does the smoke from the spiritus pastille render ghosts visible to everyone in the target area, it reveals them in detail so clear that even subtle facial expressions are easily discernable.

Secondly, the fragrant smoke of the pastille attracts ghosts from the surrounding area. Generally, if used indoors the pastille will attract all ghosts in a particular building, unless the building is especially large, in which case the most distant ghosts may not be affected. In an outdoor setting, the spiritus pastille is effective for a half-mile radius, although prevailing winds can modify that range substantially. (Wraiths in the area of effect — as well as any entities projecting from their bodies through whatever means — must make a Willpower roll against a difficulty of 9 to resist the powerful allure of the fragrant smoke).

The last Effect of the spiritus pastille is that it reveals the general disposition of a ghost. Benevolent ghosts appear silvery gray while Spectres are black.

Note that pastilles do not grant the ability to communicate with ghosts beyond visual means like hand signals and body language.

## UNBULLETS

### 3-point Wonder

These Charms look like .44 caliber bullets but with jade tips. When shot from a .44 magnum pistol, unbullets do their damage in reverse; that is, they heal the amount of damage a normal round would have inflicted. Unbullets are known to come only in .44-caliber size, and therefore *heal* 6 dice of lethal damage to the target. Being shot with an unbullet causes an intense burst of pleasure in the target that is centered on his original wound.

Unbullets require an Entropy 4, Life 3 Effect to create. They typically come six to a case, in small, carved wooden bullet cases.

Unbullets are used primarily by Thanatoic mages who sense that a badly injured individual has not yet completed her work in this life.

The use of unbullets constitutes highly vulgar magic.

# FETISHES



## THE NATURE OF FETISHES

Items of great spiritual power, Fetishes use material objects (generally called “vessels”) to serve residences for Umbrood. The powers of a Fetish depend entirely on what spirit the creating mage binds into the vessel, and mages need to seek out spirits that fulfill a particular set of qualities. The potency of the spirit, obviously, is one criterion, but by no means the only one. A glacier spirit is old and powerful and could easily freeze a mage’s opponent, but isn’t an appropriate spirit for the task if time is of the essence.

Spirits generally exhibit all the traits of their associated phenomena, both those the mage wants and doesn’t want. The glacier spirit is powerful, but slow. A cat spirit might be stealthy and a good hunter, but it’s also likely to be haughty and difficult to work with. On the other hand, Banes (“evil spirits”) are often quite powerful, but their malevolent natures and warped demands often override any advantages they may provide the mage. They’re also much, much more likely to attract the hostile attention of the Changing Breeds.

While Fetishes are objects of great power, they tend only to do one thing, based on the nature of the spirit residing in the Fetish. Some Fetishes with powerful spirits may have more than one ability (a Fetish containing a storm spirit could cause a gust of wind or release a stroke of lightning). Likewise, on rare occasions, a mage is capable of binding two spirits into the same vessel, in which case the Fetish will have the powers of both spirits.

As spirits, Fetishes are particularly well suited to work in the Umbra, an advantage that more than makes up for the temperamental nature of some Fetishes, especially for those mages who visit the Umbra with any frequency.

## USING FETISHES

Using Fetishes is generally a simple affair, with the mage ordering the spirit to do its thing when needed and the spirit responding accordingly. Some spirits are told at the time of Fetish creation what they’re expected to do for the mage, and then respond any time an appropriate set of circumstances comes around (the mage is falling more than 10 feet, under attack, drowning, et cetera).

This is the situation with Fetishes made through chiminage (see below). The more easily made Fetishes — those created using Spirit magic to order spirits about — require the mage to impel the spirit every time he wants the spirit to act. While such Fetishes will get the job done (in time), there may be a turn or two of lag while the cranky spirit gets around to his task. Obviously, a mage creating a Fetish for time-sensitive uses (a dream-catcher that snatches incoming bullets out of the air, for example) will want to be sure the spirit in his Fetish is friendly and willing.

Fetishes differ from other wonders in that, in addition to a point rating, they have a Gnosis rating. Gnosis denotes the number of dice that can be rolled for the Fetish’s Effects as well as the player’s target number when attuning the Fetish or, later, activating its power. Mages roll their Willpower both to attune a Fetish and to activate its Effects.

A mage who creates a Fetish is automatically attuned to it; otherwise, she needs to make an attunement roll. Some Fetishes won't work for mages who haven't attained a certain degree of skill in the Spirit Sphere.

Some of the sample Fetishes below (e.g., Sebastianna's Ghost-Devouring Jack-o'-lantern) can be triggered by the mage and then left to do their own thing. In such a case, the mage activates the Fetish before leaving it and the Wonder makes a Gnosis roll on its own any time it is triggered.

**Attuning a Fetish:** Roll Willpower against a difficulty of the Fetish's Gnosis; only one success is required, but failure means the spirit must be placated before a second attempt is made.

**Activating a Fetish:** Roll Willpower against a difficulty of the Fetish's Gnosis; one success activates the Fetish's power(s).

### WHO USES THESE THINGS?

The vast majority of mages who create and use Fetishes are Dreamspeakers. The shamanic aptitude with the spirit world gives them many advantages other Traditions (and Crafts) simply do not have. The particular specialty of the Dreamspeakers is interaction with the Umbrood of the Spirit Wilds or Middle Umbra, as the Hermetics call it. Dreamspeaker Fetishes, then, are generally made with spirits of nature: animal spirits, storm spirits, ocean spirits and the like.

Coming in a distant second is the Order of Hermes. There are many, many Hermetic texts on spirit dealings. Summoning, binding and warding rites are as fundamental to many Hermetic mages as eating or breathing. Unlike their earthier colleagues, the mages of the Houses of Hermes tend to deal with more astral spirits: angels, demons, spirits of architecture, Jaggings of dreams and the like. Libraries of tomes giving the True Names of many powerful spirits and knowledge of the Enochian language all combine to make Hermetics quite adept, and while they may be known for their arrogance — especially where spirits are concerned — more often than not that arrogance has been earned through long hours of study, hard work and experience.

Virtual Adepts have begun using Fetishes made with tech-spirits. Pattern Spiders, elementals of electricity and glass, and most of the various spirits of the Cockroach totem's brood have all been bound into computers or other Virtual Adept devices at one point. Such cases tend to be win/win situations. The VA gets the use of a powerful Umbrood and the Umbrood gets to fortify its position in the world. Many of these younger spirits are still interested in the world of humans and matter and don't take the same degree of umbrage at being bound into a Fetish as, say, an ancient snake or thunder spirit might.

### PARADOX HANDLING

Fetishes can be considered Paradox mitigating (see p. 10) in certain circumstances (Storyteller choice). The spirits themselves are creatures of static magic, but their powers still attract Paradox if used vulgarly. There is endless debate among mages about why this is, but the consensus is that the mage's own dynamic influence on the Fetish causes this. This does allow a Fetish, however, to be crafted as Paradox absorbing (see p. 11). Fetishes cannot possess any other Paradox handling ability (they cannot accrue, randomize or scatter Paradox).

### CRAFTING FETISHES

Whereas most other feats of Wonder creation are relatively rules-heavy, Fetish creation is weighted toward roleplaying. The mechanics for binding a spirit into a physical vessel are simple and direct. Getting to that point, however, can be tricky and involves a lot of interaction between the player and the Storyteller playing the spirit. Since the process can be time consuming, in order to prevent the game from getting bogged down, the Fetish creation scene might best be done as a one-on-one session between games with other players coming to watch only if they're particularly interested and their characters are present in-game. This is an opportunity for the Storyteller to cut loose and get in some good roleplaying.

When crafting a Fetish-to-be, the mage must remember that the item should be as beautiful as possible — it has to appeal to the spirit being bound to it. No spirit is going to willingly allow itself to be bound into a poorly crafted vessel for 20 years (or however long the agreement is for). If the vessel is wood, it must be the wood of an exemplary tree carved painstakingly by the mage into a shape the spirit finds pleasing. That can sometimes be a difficult proposition, as spirits and mages rarely see eye to eye where aesthetics are concerned.

Where technological Fetishes are involved, the vessel must be sleek, beautiful and powerful. Any tech-Fetish must be state-of-the-art from the very beginning — and it has to be constantly upgraded to keep it that way — or no spirit will be caught dead inhabiting it.

### SPIRIT MAGIC

The actual magic used to bind a spirit into a Fetish is the same whether the spirit is willing or unwilling. The Rank 4 Spirit Effect **Bind Spirit**, usually performed as an extended ritual, is enough to forge a link between the spirit and the vessel in which it is housed. Before the mage ever gets to that point, however, he faces some difficult challenges in his quest for the perfect magical tool.

### PREPARATION

Before even *thinking* about binding an Umbrood into a Fetish, the mage in question has to consider approaching the spirit in question. Not every breed of spirit is found just anywhere, and spirits aren't going to allow just any mage to

address them. Many spirits will insist that a mage be in a particular spiritual state before even granting the mage an audience. Some spirits want the mage to be in a state of ritual purity brought about by abstinence, fasting, mortification of the flesh and similar practices. Other Umbrood may want the mage radiating erotic energy. Some spirits may only deal with the mage as equals while others insist on treating the mage as an inferior.

It behooves the mage to learn as much about the spirit he's seeking as possible. If the Storm Lord speaks only to those dressed in black or gray, it sucks to be the mage in the blue jeans and red flannel shirt.

## COERCION

Through strict mystical might, it's possible — *possible* — to force a spirit into servitude in a Fetish with the fourth rank of the Spirit Sphere. It just happens that doing so is very rash and likely to have any number of negative consequences. For one thing, any Fetish so created will be surly and difficult to use. It may function perfectly 20 times and then, when the mage most needs it, it may suddenly become slow to respond. Worse, the Umbral world has its own byzantine hierarchies, and the seemingly minor wave spirit could be the protégé of a powerful oceanic Umbrood Lord, in which case the capturing mage had best never cross a large body of water without making amends.

Mages who use coercion in the creation of Fetishes (often Hermetic mages) are advised to research the particular spirit they're binding very carefully and phrase their binding spell with the kind of specificity one generally expects only from an experienced corporate attorney. Furthermore, so long as the spirit is bound in the Fetish, the mage would do well to treat it with the utmost kindness and keep the duration of the servitude to a minimum, unless he wants to risk reprisals once the spirit is loosed.

## TRIAL BY COMBAT

Another way a mage might bind a spirit into a Fetish is to enter the Umbra and beat the spirit in combat. This is difficult, and, obviously, tricky, but a mage without a lot of other resources can try such tactics. Spirits bound into Fetishes through such means commonly have one of two relationships to the mage: Being bested in combat could make the spirit respect the mage, in which case the Fetish will work smoothly. Alternatively, the spirit could resent being defeated and have it out for the mage, in which case the Fetish will have a flaw or two in its operation.

## CHIMINAGE

The more proper alternative to coercion or combat is chiminage, the act of entering into an agreement with a spirit in exchange for favors. While this is certainly much more difficult than the brute force of spirit magic, it is also a much safer route for any mage thinking in the long term.



Chiminage means that the mage interacts with the Umbrood as an equal and offers the spirit his services in exchange for the spirit taking up residence in his Fetish. Different spirits will want different things, and more powerful spirits will be more demanding of the mage. A spirit of knowledge may want the mage to teach five illiterates how to read. A powerful war spirit may ban the mage from ever choosing a peaceful resolution to a conflict when there's a perfectly good violent one. A trickster spirit may require the mage to tell one chaos-provoking lie per week. Not all acts requested by a spirit are problematic. For example, a hearth spirit may ask the mage to bake bread once a week (a request likely to endear the mage to others in his cabal).

Many Dreamspeakers are (or appear to be) touched by madness as a matter of course, and the complex web of taboos, bans, obligations and quests that a mage has to observe when heavily indebted to many spirits certainly contributes to the appearance of madness. Worse, a spirit may insist that the mage not explain the reasons for his odd behavior, leaving even his friends to wonder if he's gone over the edge.

Obviously, the mage is allowed to negotiate with the spirit in question. He need not (and should not) accept the first terms put forth by the spirit. Many spirits will not hesitate to take advantage of a gullible mage and more experienced Dreamspeakers often chuckle when they hear the catalogs of obligations a younger, less savvy mage has agreed to in exchange for binding a spirit into a relatively simple Fetish.

## THE BINDING

Once the player and Storyteller have roleplayed through the preliminaries and the spirit has been coerced or persuaded into the vessel, the mechanics come into play.

The player gets one Arete roll (standard difficulties) per hour of game-time, and the Spirit 4 Effect requires roughly four successes per point of the Fetish. The Storyteller determines a Fetish's point cost according to how valuable he

deems the Fetish's powers to be. Unlike other Wonders, it is rare for a Fetish to be ranked higher than 5 points.

Should the mage be putting a *second* spirit into the Fetish, the point cost increases by one and the difficulty increases by two; it keeps increasing for every additional spirit in the Fetish. While it might be possible to put four spirits in a Fetish, no mage yet has figured out how to get past the difficulty of 13, even with Willpower, Quintessence and the Umbrood Etiquette specialty.

## REWARDS

Few spirits are overjoyed at the prospect of serving a mage in the form of a Fetish for a period of years, but the mage can sweeten the deal considerably by channeling Quintessence into the Fetish on a regular basis. Not only does it keep the spirit happy, minimizing the probability of friction between the mage and the spirit later, but it also makes certain that the spirit is always at full power, assuring the mage of good results every time he uses the Fetish. There are times when the relationship between a mage and his Fetish can begin to resemble the relationship between a mage and his Familiar, but most mages don't want to hear that and most Familiars don't want to feel they have competition for the mage's attention, so it's generally a subject ignored in polite mage company.

## MATERIALS

The usual rules for crafting Wonders out of the most ideal substances still apply to Fetishes, but with a twist. The definition of "most ideal" is determined not by the mage, but by the spirit whose "home" the Fetish will become. A fancy chrome wand with a flawless ruby tip is an inappropriate vessel for a spirit of decay, a snake spirit or water elemental. A fire spirit might love the ruby, but insist on a brass wand, while an electricity elemental would love the chrome wand, but would probably want a copper lightning bolt on the tip. The aforementioned spirit of decay would be more comfortable in a rusted rod tipped with a corroded tin can holding a dead mouse; the snake spirit would prefer a thick willow branch carved with scales with a snake skull at the end; and the water elemental would be most comfortable in a sealed crystal orb full of triple-distilled water.

Both the mage and the spirit must agree upon the materials to be used in the fetish before the spirit will consent to the binding. Umbrood are known for making extravagant requests of mages just to see how much they can get away with, so it often falls upon the mage to veto certain options and suggest alternatives. Negotiating materials is often the lengthiest and most challenging part of the bargaining process with spirits, and frequently the point at which talks cease as mage and spirit fail to reach a mutually satisfactory agreement.

As a general rule, nature spirits prefer vessels made of wood, stone or leather, while technological spirits prefer metal and glass. With the infinite variety of spirits and their

### NEW SKILL SPECIALTY: UMBRAL ETIQUETTE

Etiquette might be defined as the art of smooth interaction. Those mages with four or more dots in the Etiquette Skill and who have interacted a great deal with Umbrood may develop Umbral Etiquette as a specialty.

Characters with this specialty are adept at interacting with Umbrood and can conduct themselves at least as well as the next person (or shapechanger), and much better than most mortals.

If ever there were a time to have Umbral Etiquette as a specialty, the process of Fetish creation is it.

**Possessed by:** Dreamspeakers, Fetish Specialists, Feral Theurges (the Changing Breeds' mystics), Umbrood Lords and Ladies

## FETISH POLITICS: TROUBLE WITH THE CHANGING BREED

Despite their utility and their inarguable advantages in the Umbrae, there is one disadvantage that wise willworkers bear in mind whenever making use of Fetishes: They are more likely than other Wonders to bring about antagonism from the Changing Breeds.

Skin-changers have a habit of being proprietary where spirit magic is concerned (hence their intensely antagonistic approach to mages mucking about in the Spirit Wilds). Consequently, when they encounter a mortal possessing a Fetish, their response is, at best, suspicious and frequently hostile. They assume the mage either stole the Fetish or, worse, murdered its rightful owner and took it. The beast men rarely know enough about the magic of the Awakened to know that human mages, too, may have an impressive command of spirits, and they're not inclined to politely ask before assuming the worst. It has happened repeatedly in the history of the World of Darkness that a mage has made a powerful Fetish only to be killed for possessing such a thing by an irate werebeast.

The fact of the matter is that there are some Fetishes that mages and the Changing Breeds share in common. Their methods of creation might differ drastically, but the end result is a similar type of spirit bound into a similar material vessel — war and death spirits, for example, are often bound into blades of all types, and apart from close (and possibly magical) examination, distinguishing a mage-forged Fetish blade from a werewolf-crafted blade is not always possible. These are the most potentially hazardous to a mage, because it's not easy to convince an angry werewolf that a Fetish familiar to him was not made by others of his kind and that the mage came by it rightfully.

Responses differ according to both the shapeshifter breed and the Fetish in question. More aggressive breeds will have a stronger knee-jerk impulse to kill a mage using a Fetish, and any breed will have a stronger reaction to a more powerful Fetish. Obviously, a mage wielding a grand klaive (or even a vague mage-forged approximation thereof) is in deep trouble if discovered by a werewolf, but even a relatively pacifistic Corax will be inclined to abscond with a 5-point Fetish if given the chance. And the worse part is, it's likely to work better for her than it ever did for the mage.

The other means by which Fetishes can cause problems with the beast folk is if the spirit bound into the Fetish was forced in by magic. A spiritually sensitive were-creature may take it upon himself to free a spirit forced into such servitude. If the mage is lucky, the beast may consider the loss of the Fetish sufficient punishment for the mage. More hostile Changing Breeds will simply consider such a transgression a good excuse to kill the mage... and probably the rest of his cabal as well.

Most mages get around such problems by maintaining a healthy discretion concerning when and where they use their Fetishes. That goes double for those mages operating in places frequented by the Changing Breeds, especially the Spirit Wilds.

The one advantage that a mage has in a situation like that is the ability to lull or exorcise a Fetish. If one of the Changing Breed is threatening a mage with a particular Fetish, the mage can lull the spirit into somnolence (Spirit 3) or exorcise the spirit from the Fetish entirely (Spirit 4). The Changing Breeds cherish their Fetishes, and using the latter technique to destroy a Fetish is nothing less than an act of war.

odd preferences, however, a mage can never be certain what kind of vessel a given spirit will want until it tells him.

## PREPARATION

Once the mage has found the spirit, created the vessel and completed negotiations (if any), there's very little preparation necessary before performing the binding ritual. The mage may want to relax a bit and fill his Avatar with Quintessence, but little else is required. Some spirits may have last minute demands, like ritual purification of the vessel or a big lump sum of Quintessence all at once, but the mage can generally deal with these minor issues without a problem.

## FLAWS

Flaws in a Fetish generally stem from one of two sources.

The most common is that the spirit was bound into the Fetish against its will and fights back in whatever way it can. This might mean the Fetish is unreliable, that the mage has to feed Quintessence into the Fetish before it will work, or that the spirit in the Fetish sometimes turns on the mage. In

such cases, if the spirit becomes too problematic, the mage may need to mollify it in some way, the most common being to keep it fed with Quintessence to keep it satisfied. As with any measure taken to deal with spirits, sometimes this strategy works, and sometimes it doesn't.

In the other case of Fetish flaw, the spirit may develop some problem with the vessel in which it is bound. In this case the Fetish Effects might be weaker than they should be. The mage can try to fix the vessel to resolve the problem, or he may need to craft an entirely new vessel and perform another entire ritual to move the spirit from one Fetish to the other.

Flaws otherwise work the same as they do for Artifacts, lowering the point cost by -1, -2, or -3. (See pp. 19-20.)

## RESONANCE

A Fetish's Resonance depends entirely on the spirit it houses. A more powerful spirit will have stronger Resonance than a weaker one, but what kind of Resonance that is depends entirely on the spirit.

Spirits, incidentally, do not themselves have Resonance, but they do have an aura that *acts* like Resonance, identifying (to a mage's Awareness trait) whether the spirit is most strongly Dynamic, Entropic or Static.

## FETISHES IN THE UMBRA

Many Wonders don't work right in the Umbra. Something about the spirit world causes certain aspects of many Wonders to behave... bizarrely.

That's not the case with Fetishes. If anything, Fetishes work *better* in the Umbra thanks to a sort of cosmic home court advantage. (At the Storyteller's discretion, the difficulty of Effects cast with or by the Fetish may benefit from a -1 difficulty modifier.)

Some mages are surprised to discover that their Fetishes look notably different in the Umbra as well, embodying their abilities more obviously. For example, a ring that houses a spirit of night and manipulates shadows may radiate a dark corona around the character's hand when he's in the Spirit Wilds. Likewise, a staff with a snake spirit bound into it may take on a scaly texture and feel unusually cold to the touch. Weapons with war spirits bound into them may take on a more jagged appearance, or grow an eye on the blade or the pommel.

The Storyteller should determine the Fetish's Umbral appearance and take some time describing it to the players in some detail when they first enter the Umbral realms. Remember that vivid description is key to pulling the players into the story.

## SAMPLE FETISHES

### ASTRAL TIKI

#### 2-point Wonder (Gnosis 4)

Among the oldest and most time-honored vessels into which to bind a spirit, carved wooden images remain among the most popular Fetishes. From the tikis of the Polynesians to the totem poles of the American Northwest to the Inuit *tupilak*, mages have bound a wide variety of spirits into carved wooden figurines.

Astral tikis (sometimes called ghost tikis or spirit tikis) are carved from black hardwood and use green glass or gems for the eyes. The most common variety is a squat freestanding figure standing about a foot high.

The astral tiki reduces the Gauntlet rating between the physical world and the spirit world by two in its area of effect. Obviously, depending on the whereabouts of the astral tiki, this could be a good thing or a bad thing. It makes traveling into astral space easier for the mage, but it also makes it easier for ghosts and Umbrood to bedevil the mage. Astral tikis affect the area in their range of vision. If the astral tiki is facing the wall, that could be two inches, or it could be up to 50 feet if it's in an open area.

Almost any natural spirit and many ghosts can be bound into an astral tiki.

Other tiki Fetishes can be found in the chapter on Polynesian magic in **Dead Magic 2: Secrets and Survivors**.

## BEAST CLOAK

#### 4-point Wonder (Gnosis 6)

One of the oldest fetishes known to the human race, beast cloaks are made of the full pelt (including the head) of a large animal. By putting on the cloak and slipping the animal's head over her own, the wearer of the cloak takes the shape of that particular animal. Bears, bulls, big cats, wolves and bison are the most common cloaks, but there are some very odd ones that allow humans to take the shape of sharks, komodo dragons or elephants.

The spirit bound into the item is, obviously, the spirit of the appropriate animal. While these items were once relatively common, they have grown much less so as animal spirits have grown increasingly hesitant to be bound into them. A mage entering into a chiminage arrangement with spirit for this purpose is going to be run ragged by the spirit before it will agree to be bound into one of these fetishes.

All the standard benefits of shape-shifting apply: a mage donning a bison cloak, for example, will be much larger and stronger and have an array of natural weapons and attacks (goring, trampling) to use against an enemy. A giant cat will have great advantages with Stealth rolls (the difficulty of such rolls might go down by three, for example) and have a much greater Dexterity than the mage would without the pelt.

## CLOË THE GROWL-GROWL BEAR

#### 3-point Wonder (Gnosis 7)

Created by a Verbena parent concerned with protecting her twin daughters, Laurel and Heather, Cloë is a cute plush bear, hand-sewn together from scraps of rabbit fur. Cloë's job was to protect the children from any danger that might befall them. In moments of crisis, Cloë the growl-growl bear transforms into an enormous female grizzly and does what she can to protect the girls. When Laurel fell into a pond, Cloë fished her out. When a wild dog attacked the girls after they wandered too far from home, Cloë took care of it. And when a New World Order agent tried to kidnap the girls as a means of silencing their mother, a major participant in the Ascension War, Cloë took care of them too.

And while Laurel has "grown up" and doesn't care to have Cloë around, Heather (who has followed in her mother's witchy footprints) still has Cloë on her bed. Cloë continues to take care of her, even though she's 34.

While the toy Cloë shows a little wear, part of the bound spirit's task is to keep the toy in good shape, so while the fur may be a little matted, the stitching is all solid and the stuffed animal is in remarkably good shape.

Fetishes like Cloë utilize a mother bear spirit, although spirits of she-wolves, lions, moose and other creatures that are highly protective of their young can also work.

One of the advantages of a Fetish for tasks like this is that Cloë can defend against Umbral threats as well. Cloë can take out a pack of Banes as easily as a pack of wild dogs, and no one (without Umbral sight) would even know that anything had happened.

## CLOË THE GUARDIAN

Rage 7, Gnosis 7, Willpower 7, Essence 21

**Charms:** Call Parent (telepathically calls to the ward's parent(s)), Healing (For 2 Essence Cloë can roll her Gnosis against a difficulty of 6 to heal Health Levels; she can do this only for her current ward), Materialize (5 Essence lets her manifest in physical form for a scene), Re-form

**Image:** Cloë appears as a large bear. When she stands upright, she's about 12 feet tall. She is normally quiet and somewhat maternal, but if the children are threatened, her rage is terrifying.

When Materialized, Cloë has the following stats:

**Attributes:** Strength 5, Dexterity 3, Stamina 5

**Abilities:** Alertness 4, Athletics 3, Brawl 4, Intimidation 4  
Willpower 7

Health Levels OK, OK, OK, -1, -1, -1, -1, -2, -2, -4, Immaterial

**Attack:** Bite for three dice of aggravated damage; claw swipe for eight

## INFORM-A-VISION

### 4-point Wonder (Gnosis 8)

Techno-Fetishes require more raw knowledge to create than standard Fetishes, because the rules of Fetish creation require that the mage needs to create the vessel himself, and there aren't many mages who can build a TV or a computer.

For those Sons of Ether, Virtual Adepts and Hermetics of House Verditius who dream in schematics and data architecture, however, it is an option.

Inform-a-Vision is a TV or computer monitor built by the mage and into which he has bound a powerful information spirit. The information spirit firmly believes that "information wants to be free," and does everything in its power to provide its user with any information sought.

The version made by the Sons of Ether tends to look like a clunky old television set from the 1930s with an enormous antenna array poking out in all directions "to capture knowledge from the ether." The VA version strongly resembles a web browser with two or three color-coded info-banners moving across the bottom of the screen.

Inform-a-Vision facilitates any kind of information gathering, from finding out what the weather is like in Kuala Lumpur to analyzing political trends to decrypting a Technocracy computer program.

The spirit is able to help depending on how accessible the information is. The fewer people who know a particular datum, the harder it is for the information spirit to learn it as well.

How the spirit presents the information depends on the information itself. Inform-a-Vision filters all the information in the datasphere and presents the most salient data to the mage, including recordings of broadcast transmissions, im-

portant documents in PDF format and video or audio footage of anything covered by a camera or other recording device.

When the Inform-a-Vision spirit is looking for information, the Storyteller rolls its Gnosis to determine how successful it is. The target number depends on the availability of the information.

Information	Target Number
Generally available	3
Hard to find	6
Not on an internet-connected computer	7
Known only to a few	9

While Inform-a-Vision is an incredibly powerful source of information, Storytellers should not allow players to use this one Fetish to render the game dull by revealing all the secrets. Sometimes the best the thing the Device will be able to do is point the characters in the direction of the questions they *really* ought to be asking. Information spirits, after all, are under the auspices of Mercury, and are consequently ever changing and difficult to manage.

## SEBASTIANNA'S GHOST-DEVOURING JACK-O'-LANTERN

### 2-point Wonder (Gnosis 5)

This Hollow One Fetish is, in effect, a blend of a Fetish and a Charm. While it's a vessel into which a spirit has been bound (i.e., a Fetish), unless the carved pumpkin is magically prevented from rotting, it has a maximum duration of only two weeks or so, which constitutes a single-serving or "disposable" Wonder (i.e., a Charm).

The ghost devouring jack-o'-lantern sucks in ghosts (or other spirits, if the mage creates it thus) in a 30-foot radius and holds them until they are freed or the pumpkin rots away.

A mage creates one of these Fetishes by finding a large, perfect pumpkin and carving it into a jack-o'-lantern with sharp teeth. Into this vessel the mage binds a spirit of hunger or imprisonment.

Ghosts captured in this Fetish are released when the top is taken off. Ghosts trapped in such Fetishes will *not* be pleased about it, and mages should be ready for full-scale war/haunting when spirits are released.

The advantage to short-term Fetishes like the jack-o'-lantern, however, is that it takes much less effort to convince a spirit to be bound into a Fetish for two weeks than for 20 years or more. Whereas a hunger spirit might require a mage to fast for two weeks every year in exchange for being bound into a more enduring vessel, that same spirit is likely to let itself be bound into a ghost-devouring jack-o'-lantern in exchange for some small act of chiminage, like a one-day fast while meditating on the nature of hunger.

If the mage illuminates the jack-o'-lantern with an appropriate Charm candle (a candle that attracts ghosts, for instance), the effect can be particularly powerful.

One of these items can trap a number of ghosts equal to its Gnosis rating. To consume a ghost, the jack-o'-lantern rolls Gnosis against the target ghost's Willpower. The Fetish

will then hold the ghost until the jack-o'-lantern rots away or for one month, whichever comes first.

## VENGEANCE BLADE

### 1-point Wonder (Gnosis 2)

A mage who has a particular individual foe that he wants to cut down can make a vengeance blade that guides his hand any time he's fighting that enemy (or even that enemy's allies).

The classic vengeance blade is carefully chiseled from black obsidian and has the name of the target scratched onto the blade, although some mages have updated that model a bit. A pissed off Virtual Adept actually turned a scalpel into a vengeance blade and etched the enemy's name *and* the entire reason for the revenge into the blade using tiny laser etching.

Part of the process of crafting a vengeance blade is explaining to the spirit the deed that needs to be avenged. Vengeance spirits are easily fired up (perhaps too easily fired up), but they also insist that the revenge be a rightful one. It is not possible to create a vengeance blade for a minor slight, and the spirit will be offended if asked to do so.

In melee combat, the blade subtracts two from the difficulty to hit the blade's intended victim and adds two dice

to the damage pool. Furthermore, it subtracts one from the difficulty and adds one to the damage pool when used against the allies of the enemy. A clever mage will use a Prime 2 Effect to enchant the blade before binding the spirit in, thereby allowing the blade to inflict aggravated damage as well.

Vengeance blades have no benefits against targets who are not part of the blade's purpose.

Once the blade fulfills its intended purpose (usually, the death of the chosen foe or at least his crippling), it shatters.

## THE LENS OF ZADKIEL

### 3-point Wonder (Gnosis 7)

Zadkiel is an angel of knowledge and understanding. The Fetish that bears its name is a crystal lens with a diameter of six inches. Around the circumference of the lens is a binding formula written in Enochian.

When a mage peers through the lens of Zadkiel, anything he sees is translated for him by the angel bound into the crystal. Foreign languages, high-level encryption, and even werewolf glyphs and the strange signs of imbued hunters are made clear as day.

## ANGELIC FETISHES

Hermetic mages frequently deal with Umbrood, but not, as a general rule, the Naturae typically dealt with by Dreamspeakers (or the Changing Breed, for that matter).

Hermetics generally deal with the higher, more rarified astral spirits, like angels, muses and even Paradox spirits. These include, most especially, spirits of communication and information (those spirits ruled by Mercury, the other name of the god from which the Order of Hermes takes its name), but they also deal more with the other gods and spirits associated with the planets and Shard Realms of Astral Space. Some Hermetics deal primarily with the cabalistic angels of the holy sephiroth, while others deal mainly with the angels named in ancient Gnostic texts.

The problem with angel magic is that angels are a little more limited than Naturae, and each has its own name by which the mage summons the angel. If a particular angel is bound into a Fetish, it is neither free to attend to its celestial business, nor can it respond when summoned by another mage.

Any given angelic Fetish is therefore unique. There is only one Zadkiel, only one Fanuel, and so on. Angels, that is to say, are a limited resource.

For this reason, Hermetics are always in competition with one another to learn the True Names of angels that have not yet been discovered and bound into Fetishes. One of the first things the Hermetic Order did after the Reckoning was perform a sort of celestial roll call to find out which angels responded. Many of those who had been on record as having been bound into Fetishes were found to be free, indicating that the Fetish they had been bound to had been destroyed.

The legendary Archmage Porthos Fitz-Empress alone is said to have monopolized over a hundred angels (and powerful

ones at that) in his collection of Fetishes, most of which appear to have been destroyed in the cosmic conflagration that slew their master (much to the delight of many up-and-coming Hermetic magi who coveted the angels Master Porthos had bound into his service). The knowledge that some of Master Porthos' Fetishes remain intact, however, is the news that makes many Hermetics want to go in search of whatever hidden vault or secret sanctum the wily old Archmage hid them in. Having even a moderately powerful Fetish that once belonged to such a mage is a thing of which Hermetics' dreams are made.

The spirits that the Hermetics command are so abstract as to be more akin to principles than entities. Consequently, angelic Fetishes occupy the wide gap between technomagical Devices and standard Dreamspeaker Fetishes.

Oddly, while the mages of the Celestial Chorus are generally thought to have more interaction with angels, they do not use angels in Fetishes and, in general, find the practice vaguely obscene.

At various times, most recently in the 1920s, skirmishes have broken out between factions of the Celestial Chorus and the Order of Hermes because of the Hermetics' use of angels in Fetishes. The Choristers view such practices as magic that weakens or goes contrary to the will of the One and it's been a bone of contention between the two Traditions for nearly the entire history of the Council of the Nine Mystic Traditions. The last 80 years have seen the Traditions too beset by the Technocracy for these disagreements to flare up, but among certain factions of the Choristers and in certain of the Hermetic Houses, the conflict still smolders.

The lens also sees through magical illusions, vampiric Chimerstry and reveals even the most convincing holograms for what they are.

If the lens is used against an active power, roll the Fetish's Gnosis against the level of the power it's working against.

## WANT MORE?

This is a particularly short list, but it gives the Storyteller ideas. For additional examples of more traditional Fetishes, see **Werewolf: the Apocalypse**, the **Werewolf Players Guide** and **Hammer and Klaive**. While common wisdom states that most items created by the Changing Breeds can only be used by the

Changing Breeds, that's not really the case. The reality is that a mage with sufficient skill in the Spirit Sphere *can* use a Shifter's Fetish, but the Shifter is likely either to fight to the death for his Fetish or come after the mage who took it from him.

Provided the mage is an Adept of Spirit (or better), all that is required to use a Changing Breed Fetish is the **Compel Spirit** rote, followed by the standard Willpower roll against the Fetish's Gnosis to attune it. However, if the mage fails this roll, she will never be able to attune herself to that Fetish unless she somehow appeases the spirit in the Fetish and gains its good will through some major act of atonement.

## PERIAPTS



### THE NATURE OF PERIAPTS

Periapts are, at root, a form of rechargeable Tass. The magic that creates Periapts imbues them with the power to hold Quintessence and grants their Patterns sufficient stability to remain intact even when depleted of Quintessence.

### USING PERIAPTS

Mages use Periapts for all manner of magical workings. Some mages keep a Periapt on their person at all times, in order to get the benefits of plentiful Quintessence. Other mages — those who don't want to sully their Wonders with Paradox — use their Periapts only in the confines of their sancta, usually during the Quintessence-intensive process of making other Wonders or similarly complex extended rituals.

So long as the mage is in physical contact with a Periapt, and is doing nothing else that turn, she need only concentrate on freeing the Quintessence from the Wonder to replenish her personal reserves. Likewise, a mage can access the Quintessence in a Periapt carried by her Familiar in the same way due to the nature of her link with the Spirit. If, on the other hand, the mage is doing other things (making a Dodge roll, for example) she must make a Wits + Meditation roll (subject to normal multiple action rules) to access the Quintessence that turn.

Note that the mage need not be in contact with the Periapt itself. If the Periapt is a jewel set in a ring, just being in touch with the ring is sufficient contact to allow her to access the jewel's Quintessence.

A mage can draw Quintessence out of a Periapt she is not touching with a Prime 2 Effect, and she can do so at a greater distance with a Prime 2/Correspondence 2 conjunctive Effect.

It's a common practice for mages either to turn key foci into Periapts or use the Wonders to adorn their main foci. Doing so streamlines the magical process and doesn't require

the mage to carry another item on her person. Consequently, Periapts have been known to come in a staggering array of forms, including ether goggles, guns (Euthanatos), holy symbols (Choristers), iPods (Virtual Adepts), and so on.

The potential hazard of this practice is that Periapts can, under certain circumstances (absorbing too much Paradox all at once, for example), become unstable and shatter. If that happens to a mage whose Periapt also happens to be his most commonly used focus, the mage has lost both, leaving him S.O.L.

### FUSED PERIAPTS

A Periapt worn directly on the skin for a long enough period of time will fuse to the mage who draws on its Quintessence. Alternatively, some mages prefer to let their Familiars wear their Periapts for them. Periapts that fuse to the mage commonly take the form of navel jewels and bindhis (the brow jewel often worn by Hindu women), but the vast array of forms taken by Periapts affords a mage many other options as well. Some Nephandi, for example, make Periapts out of lengths of horn that they then fuse to their skulls.

Periapts fuse into the skin after a number of weeks equal to 10 weeks minus the rating of the Periapt. A 4-point Periapt, then, will fuse onto the skin in six weeks. If the fused Periapt is pulled off the mage, he immediately loses the ability to channel the Quintessence within (without resorting to Prime Effects) until he regains control of the Periapt.

When a Periapt has fused to his physical Pattern, the mage channels the Quintessence from the Periapt just as she uses the Quintessence from her own Pattern. She is able to recharge the Quintessence in the same way that she recharges her own Quintessence stores (meditating at a Node, for example).

Woe unto the mage who gets a few hefty Paradox Backlashes in a row, however, because the Periapt also increases the amount of Paradox a mage can carry. This fact alone keeps some mages from fusing a Periapt onto their bodies. Even the possibility of a 25-point Paradox Backlash is enough to scare many mages away.



Periapt can also be fused into Familiars (provided the Familiar doesn't have a problem with it), and the mage is then able to use the Quintessence just as easily.

## LIVING PERIAPTS

With mastery of the Life Sphere, the mage can craft a living Periapt. Many mages have turned their Familiars into Periapt, although others argue that doing so is putting too many eggs into one basket.

Mages have been known to experiment from time to time with all manner of Periapt. Some have made Periapt out of their own children.

At the height of their power, the Verbena were known for turning whole groves of oak trees into extraordinarily powerful Periapt fairly bursting with Entropic (Primordial), Dynamic (Wild/Vital) or Static (Solid/Enduring) Resonance. The energies they could channel in those groves were astonishing. While such places were often situated on Nodes, those without Nodes were frequently recharged with the sacrifice of violent criminals and prisoners of war to the trees, using the Prime rote, **Lambs to the Slaughter**.

The problem with making living things Periapt is that they, as dynamic, living things, can either absorb the Resonance or they can change the Resonance invested in them. A Technocratic mage once got a big surprise when, as an experiment, he filled a kitten with the Resonance Static (Controlled) only to find that the kitten, who had an unusually wild nature, transmuted the Resonance entirely into Dynamic (Playful).

More complex life forms have more complex and dynamic interactions with Quintessence, and people, in particular, who walk around full of Quintessence for long periods of time often show some very interesting side effects ranging from growth spurts to accelerated aging to the Green Thumb Merit. At least one mage was known to have Awakened after his master made him into a Periapt (although that phenomenon, unique in magical history, could have been nothing more than coincidence).

## RECHARGING PERIAPTS

There are two ways of recharging a Periapt: the fast way and the slow way.

The fast way involves using Prime Effects to channel Quintessence from a source into the Periapt. Prime 3 is enough to channel Quintessence from a Node or from bits of Tass. This level of Prime will also allow a mage to transfer Quintessence from one Periapt to another, provided both have Resonance of the same general type (i.e., Dynamic, Static or Entropic). With Prime 4, the mage can channel Quintessence directly from an inanimate physical Pattern (unweaving its Pattern and possibly destroying it), and with immense powers of Prime 5, the mage can channel Quintessence directly out of a living (or undead) Pattern and into the Periapt. This last example can be an ideal way to recharge a Periapt that has Resonance that's hard to match any other way. A Periapt with Dynamic Resonance (Savage/Mighty/Bestial) could be recharged by unweaving a werewolf's physical Pattern, for example, and channeling its Quintessence (20 points in man-wolf form) into the Periapt. On the other hand, draining a vampire's Pattern will provide the mage with a minimum of 10 pawns of Entropic Resonance of the (Parasitic/Malicious/Dead) type and more if the bloodsucker is older and more powerful.

There's an even more disturbing option for this Periapt-recharging strategy: If a rival mage has Resonance that would match nicely with your Periapt, the same Prime Effect can be used to drain his essence (and Quintessence) into your Wonder. A fully loaded mage provides 30 points of Quintessence (the 10 points held by all mortals plus up to 20 more, depending on how much Quintessence the mage had stored in his Pattern at the time) — more than enough to fully recharge all but the largest (7 Background points or more) Periapts.

The drawback to this strategy is that the act of “cannibalizing” another mage for Quintessence in this fashion *might* color the Resonance harvested. A Nephandus doing this to a Celestial Chorister might wind up with a Periapt full of Entropic Resonance of the Malevolent type, while the reverse scenario might provide the Chorister with a Periapt full of Dynamic (Righteous) Resonance. Whether the act colors the nature of the Resonance is entirely the Storyteller's call.

The slow means of recharging a Periapt involves leaving the Periapt at a Node or in the presence of Tass with the appropriate Resonance. A Periapt absorbs its point rating in Quintessence for every full day it's left at a Node.

## PERIAPTS AND PARADOX

Just as it does in a mage's personal Pattern, Paradox that a Periapt absorbs displaces Quintessence. A Periapt used to fuel a vulgar Effect (without witnesses) will automatically gain one point of Paradox and will henceforth hold one less point of Quintessence than its previous maximum, until the Paradox fades away.

A master of Prime can remove Paradox from a Periapt by using a Prime 5 Effect to unravel the stored Paradox and send it back into the ether from which it came — or into some other Pattern.

The only other way of removing Paradox from a Periapt is to let it fade with time. By storing the Wonder in a place where the Quintessence has the same Resonance as the Periapt, the Paradox will slowly be displaced by the accordant Tass. This takes time. Inanimate objects will shed one point of Paradox per month, while living Periapts, being inherently more dynamic, shed one point of Paradox per week.

While some young mages consider Periapts' tendency to absorb Paradox a problem, older mages use Periapts primarily because they *do* absorb Paradox. Mages who have been hit with powerful Paradox Backlashes are more than happy to let the Paradox accrue in the Periapt and then let the Periapt bleed off its Paradox by leaving it fallow for however long it takes.

There is, unsurprisingly, a downside to this. If the Periapt is destroyed, the mage takes the full Paradox load of the Periapt as one big Backlash. If the mage has Paradox of his own in his Pattern, it's added to the Backlash. That any Periapt will shatter immediately when it contains more Paradox than Quintessence makes this all the more problematic.

Some Familiars, incidentally, can devour the Paradox from a Periapt — lucky are those mages with such a creature.

## CRAFTING PERIAPTS

The actual crafting of a Periapt is relatively easy. The difficult part is acquiring the requisite amount of Tass. Tass is generally found

one to four pawns at a time. Crafting a Periapt requires the mage to get 10 pawns of Tass for every point he wants in his Wonder. Periapts hold five Quintessence points per level, so a mage wanting to create a 5-point Periapt needs to come up with 50 pawns of Tass.

## MATERIALS

Periapts are the most Tass-intensive Wonders known. Complicating matters even more, the mage must come up with 10 points of Tass with the *same* Resonance. Some mages insist on using the exact same sort of Tass, but others insist that as long as the Resonance is the same, totally different manifestations of Tass can be used to create the Periapt. While it is technically possible to use different types of Tass in a Periapt, doing so introduces flaws, like the Unstable Resonance flaw listed below.

## PREPARATION

The mage's first step in creating a Periapt is to ritually cleanse the item into which he will be depositing his collected Quintessence. This may or may not require a Prime 1 Effect. Items that have not been cleansed in this way might have Resonance of their own, resulting in the Fluctuating Resonance flaw (below). The difficulty of this first step depends on the size of the item and the amount of inherent Resonance it contains. Items that already have strong Resonance of their own (a murder weapon, a police badge, a piece of cutting edge technology) need more extensive cleansing and are more likely to require magic to do so.

Once the item is purified, the Tass is fused with it using a Matter 5 Effect (or Life 5 if it's living), making it, in effect, an alloy of Tass and matter. This requires two successes for each point of the Periapt (i.e., six successes for a 3-point Periapt).

The new Periapt must be left full of Quintessence for several weeks after its crafting as it learns to accommodate its spiritual charge (as a general guidelines, one month for every level of the Wonder). The mage is free to use the Periapt any time after that.

Wise mages will note that using the Periapt too soon after its creation is one of the commonest sources of flaws (see below).

## WHO USES THESE THINGS?

There are very few mages who do not use Periapts at one point or another during their magical careers. The convenience of having a reserve of Quintessence is highly valued in the mage community. Even those mages who don't use Periapts directly as sources of Quintessence may wind up using one to power a Wonder like a Talisman.

The Technocracy, tied as it is to its Devices, makes ample use of its own form of Periapts, called Matrices (singular: Matrix).

Among the Traditions, the Sons of Ether are by far the most frequent users of Periapts, using them to power all manner of strange Inventions.

Certain Traditions, notably the Akashic Brotherhood, have factions that believe that over-reliance on Periapts can make the mage lazy and mystically weak. Tools, it has been said, can be the subtlest kind of trap.

## FLAWS

A number of flaws can affect Periapts, most of which are side effects from sloppy creation. A sampling of the more common flaws to which Periapts are prone follows.

**Fluctuating Resonance (-1 point):** Periapts with fluctuating Resonance were created with different kinds of Tass. The mage may have been lazy or impatient, or he might have misidentified some of the Tass used in the creation of the Periapt. The problem with a Periapt with fluctuating Resonance is that you can never be certain of the Resonance that you will draw from the Wonder. It might typically provide the mage with Resonance that is Dynamic (Fiery), but every now and then it gives him Resonance that is Entropic (Withering). In the case of a generally destructive Effect, that won't be a problem, but if the mage is trying to jumpstart an ether engine, it's going to cause trouble.

The more disparate the types of Resonance, the more problematic it can be for the mage. A Periapt that provides Resonance that is Dynamic (Fulminating) and Dynamic (Inspirational) can cause a mage no end of trouble if he wants one and gets the other.

**Amplified Resonance (-1 point):** The mage somehow stumbled on a formula that amplifies the Resonance "side effects" by orders of magnitude. That doesn't mean that the mage gets any more Quintessence than he normally would when using the Periapt, just that the visible manifestations of the Resonance are much more obvious. Thus, a Periapt with the Resonance Entropic (Shadowy) would cause a place to be infested with shadows every time its Quintessence was drawn upon. Fiery Resonance would likely result in flammable items spontaneously combusting when the mage used the Periapt, likewise the amplified Resonance "Insightful" would fill the mage's head with a storm of understanding every time he used the Periapt. Unfortunately, after the moment of drawing off the Quintessence, the insights would vanish just as quickly.

Note that this is a flaw. While there may occasionally be ways of using the amplified Resonance to the character's advantage, the Storyteller should crack down on players who try to get away with turning a flaw into pure benefit.

**Fast Drainer (-2 points):** The Periapt, for whatever reason, doesn't store Quintessence well. For each point the mage uses, the Periapt loses two.

**Unstable (-3 points):** This is the most potentially catastrophic of the flaws found in Periapts. An unstable Periapt cracks or shatters any time there's a change of more than five points of Quintessence or Paradox in a single scene. That means the Periapt cannot be quickly refilled using the Prime Sphere, that it shouldn't be used during big battles and the mage has to be extremely careful to avoid Effects likely to garner her Paradox. If the Periapt contains any Paradox when it shatters, it combines with any Paradox in the mage's Pattern and hits her with one big Backlash.

## RESONANCE

More than any other Wonder, Resonance plays a key role in making and using Periapts. The vast majority of these Wonders hold a specific type of Resonance, gained at creation, and while that Resonance can be a boon when generating Effects that harmonize

with the Resonance, it can cause problems for a mage trying to fuel an Effect that is egregiously out of tune with the Periapt he's using. There are two ways a Storyteller might choose to play these situations. On one hand, she may use the rules on Resonance in the Appendix of **The Fallen Tower: Las Vegas**, or the Storyteller can manage all the manifestations of Resonance herself.

While it is extremely difficult to change the Resonance of a Periapt, it is by no means impossible. As with other techniques for the Periapt, there are faster ways and slower ways.

A Master of the Prime Sphere can permanently change the Resonance of a Periapt so long as she gets two additional successes per point of the Wonder and has at least one pawn of Tass with the new Resonance (to model the Periapt after).

Alternatively, a mage who has fused his Periapt to his body will, over the space of many months, change the Resonance of his Periapt to match his own Resonance (whether he wants to or not) if he has three or more points of one particular kind of Resonance — i.e., Dynamic (Savage) or Static (Imperturbable). The time frame associated with this kind of change is generally one year minus one month per point of the Periapt; a 3-point Periapt, then, would take on the mage's Resonance over the course of nine months.

## SAMPLE PERIAPTS THE ÆTHER CODEx

### 4-point Wonder, Dynamic Resonance (Knowledgable)

Created for those Hermetic scholars of things angelic and spiritual, the Æther Codex gives up its Quintessence slowly as the reader turns its pages. The Tass that went into the Æther Codex came mostly from the words of the Muses that were then spun into thread and mashed in with wood pulp to create paper.

Anytime a mage is making short jaunts into the Astral Realms, this is likely to be one of the books open on the top of his desk in order to make the repeated crossing of the Gauntlet less draining.

## "CODING TUNES, VOL. I"

### 2-point Wonder, Static Resonance (Ordered)

Composing magically active computer code is a draining experience. Just as with writing out magic text in a book, it's relatively slow going and Quintessence-intensive.

Tessie Thompson of the Virtual Adepts found a way to make it easier: by creating a Periapt from a CD, she was able to create a Wonder that feeds her Quintessence at a steady rate as she listens to the music on the CD. Not only did the music make her work less tedious, but also the slow feed of Quintessence from her headphones keeps her Pattern fueled up for those long coding sessions. And, since the Resonance on the CD is Ordered, it helps keep her code logical and elegant. The only downside to this approach is that she's getting tired of listening to the same songs over and over again, so she plans on making another CD, a 3-point Wonder this time.

## DR. REUTER'S JEWEL OF INSPIRATION

### 3-point Wonder, Dynamic Resonance (Creative)

When Doctor Barrington "Safety Third!" Reuter, the gung-ho Son of Ether associated with the Illumi-Naughty Cabal in San

Francisco, found that a pronounced shortage of Etheric Force was hamstringing his more cutting-edge Research projects, he vowed to rectify the problem.

He began a long quest for Tass from which he could create a Periapt. This quest took him to sites as far flung as Irian Jaya, the brothels of Amsterdam and the depths of the Brazilian rainforest. At last, he was able to find enough Tass of the appropriate type and he channeled all of it into one bright red ruby that he wears on a leather thong around his neck.

Reuter is having a problem with his Periapt, however, because his impetuous nature has garnered him many points of Paradox that are now interfering with his researches, and he has neither the patience to let the Paradox bleed off nor a large enough Quintessence pool to allow him to do magic on the scale to which he has become accustomed.

## THE FILTH ALTAR

### 5-point Wonder, Entropic Resonance (Vile)

Created in the Yucatan long before Europeans arrived, the Filth Altar is an old and powerful Nephandic Periapt that still makes occasional appearances in Central and South America. All mages know that life force provides Quintessence; the Filth Altar not only gains energy from the bodies and souls of those sacrificed on it, but it gains Quintessence from their humiliation, their panic and their pain. A normal person tormented to death on the Filth Altar would provide the Nephandi with 10 points of Quintessence from their Pattern, and, depending on how long the torture went on, as much as 20 additional points of Quintessence from the emotional agony. To get the full 30 points, however, the torture must be made to last at least three weeks. After three weeks, a properly tortured individual isn't likely to have enough emotional energy to spare for any kind of additional Quintessence release.

## HYDROGEN BATTERY

### 5-point Wonder, Static Resonance (Stable)

Of all the Technocratic Matrices (the Technocratic term for a Periapt), one of the most common is the hydrogen battery. Indeed, such Matrices, miniaturized, provide the fuel source for most of their larger Inventions.

## THE KISMET BINDHI

### 4-point Wonder, Dynamic Resonance (Insightful)

Lola Margopoulos of the Euthanatoi found that she was habitually reading the Fates of so many of the people who crossed her path that she was going through her own limited reserves of Quintessence much too quickly.

Her first Periapt was a Tarot card (The Moon), which she created by harvesting moonlight from certain sacred spots out in the country. In time, even the additional Quintessence of her Moon card was not enough, and she wanted something that left her hands free.

The bindhi she now wears she made by harvesting Tass from her grandmother's scrying pool. An ice-blue gem, she has let it fuse to her brow, and she is able to use its Quintessence as though it were from her own Pattern.

Since Lola's magic (fortune telling) is all coincidental, she need not worry that her bindhi will get filled up with Paradox.

## MICHAEL DURITISTRANG'S CREEPY-ASS CHINA DOLL

### 5-point Wonder, Entropic Resonance (Spooky)

When Michael came across the china doll at a garage sale, it did everything but call his name. It was in perfect shape, except its eyes were missing. Most of Michael's magic involves ghosts and necromancy and he had casually been looking for just the right vessel to turn into a Periapt.

The Hollower had plenty of Tass. He'd been saving ectoplasm in hermetically sealed jars almost as long as he'd been chatting with the dead, so the necessary 50 pawns of Tass wasn't a problem.

He now carries the empty-eyed china doll around with him everywhere he goes, just on the off chance that he might need to pull out some big magic.

## SEA SPIRIT SHELL

### 3-point Wonder, Dynamic Resonance (Oceanic)

Michael Eimut is a Dreamspeaker of the Coast Salish tribe. His Totem is Ocean and much of his magic has to do with the ocean and its vast array of spirits. Calling those spirits with such frequency, however, costs a lot in Quintessence. Eimut therefore gathered up such Tass as he could — morning sea foam, orca bones and blue beach glass — and created the Sea Spirit Shell.

Since he has recently left Seattle for the Marquesas Islands to escape an encroaching Technocratic raid, having the shell allows him to summon and meet this other Ocean Brood without draining his Quintessence levels.

## THE TEMPLE OF THE THEOI CTHON

### 8-point Wonder, Entropic Resonance (Strange)

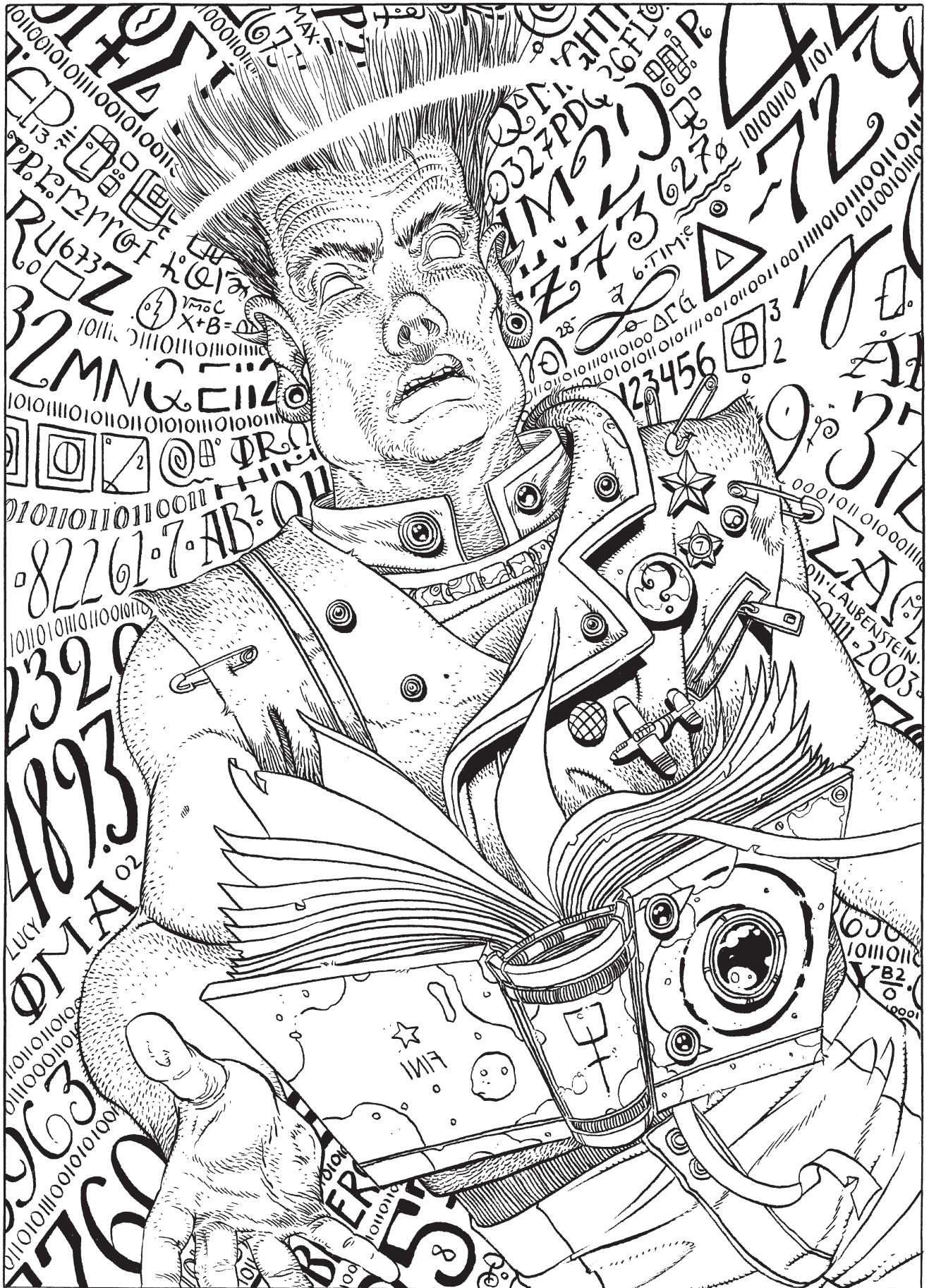
Not all Periapts are convenient hand-held items. Larger things, including buildings, can be infused with the power of Quintessence and made to give up their power to those users who want the kinds of Resonance they provide.

The Temple of Theoi Cthon is a mystery in the magely world. It sits on a 1-point Node in the distant backwaters of Greece, and remains full of Quintessence. Above ground, the temple resembles any of a hundred old Greek temples, but below ground, it evinces a system of tunnels and caverns that are unknown anywhere else in Greece.

The temple has not been taken over for two reasons: Strange Resonance can be difficult to use. The types of magic it can be channeled into are limited, and any other types of Effects can go awry in peculiar and disturbing ways.

Secondly, the Temple of Theoi Cthon has an Arcane rating of 4. Even those mages who have successfully carried out rituals there rapidly forget about its existence.

Hollow Ones, Euthanatos and Nephandi have had the best results from performing magic in the temple. Others have generally found their results less than ideal.



# FRAGMENTS OF THEIR CREATORS' WILL: TALISMANS & GRITTOIRES

## TALISMANS & DEVICES:



Talismans and Devices are more than simple Wonders capable of performing a single Effect. They represent the absolute peak of the magical artificer's art, because they can be simultaneously powerful artifacts that produce impressive magical Effects, Periapts that store much-needed Quintessence and Unique Foci for one or more of the mage's arts. Obviously,

few ambitious mages are going to set out to create a Talisman with an Arete of only 1 or 2. Due to the difficulty in making them, however, far more mages attempt to create powerful Talismans than actually succeed.

Regardless of the power of the Wonder, there is also a risk involved in creating a Talisman or a Device. If it is stolen, the thief can use the Talisman to affect its creator. As a result, many mages never even consider creating an item so intimately tied to their Avatar. Also, because each Talisman requires an expenditure of Willpower, very few mages ever make more than one.

### REASONS TO CREATE TALISMANS AND DEVICES

Wise mages create Talismans for reasons more subtle and more complex than a desire for raw power. Some mages see a Talisman as the ultimate evidence of their skill. The Dreamspeakers, the Order of Hermes and the Sons of Ether are the three Traditions most focused on creating Wonders. Mages who belong to these Traditions gain significant amounts of prestige if they successfully create an impressive Talisman. Even in other, less materialistic Traditions, Talisman creation can be an important step toward gaining personal power and indicates that the maker is someone of note. This perspective is even truer among the five Conventions of the Technocracy. The Technocracy's leaders consider Enlightened Scientists who successfully create powerful Devices to be important members of their Convention. Any Technocrat who creates a Device will be considered for a promotion; few Technocrats rise to the highest positions of leaderships without having created one.

In addition to the status gained by their creation, Talismans also offer several practical advantages. Although its creator's enemies can use a stolen Talisman as a conduit to cast magic on her, the creator can also use her Talisman to cast magic on anyone who steals or even touches it. If the mage is skilled in Correspondence, she can even transport the item back to her if it is ever lost or captured. Mages also can loan Talismans to others — even Sleepers — because they have their own Arete score.

## USING TALISMANS

Because Talismans and Devices contain their own Arete score and a fragment of the mage's Willpower, they can sometimes act on their own, either independently or with only a whispered command from its owner. Mages can even design Talismans that activate whenever the mage is threatened, regardless of whether she is aware of the threat or even conscious. Unfortunately, the Paradox gained from an item suddenly activating on its own in a crowded room may be worse than the threat it is helping to prevent. Also, having a defensive Talisman turn an angry young teen who punches its creator into a pile of smoking ash could cause all manner of problems. As a result, mages who create Talismans attempt to severely limit the ways in which they can operate on their own.

Their ability to operate independently, however, can still be exceedingly useful. When using magic in conjunction with an Ability, the mage need not perform the Effect before using the Ability to avoid dice pool penalties, because the Talisman is taking the action. Instead, both actions can be performed in the same turn, allowing the mage to perform actions like using Time magic to gain additional actions in a turn, and firing multiple shots with a gun without penalty, all in the same turn. Talismans used in this way have saved the lives of more than one mage. Mages can even use Talismans to overcome one of the greatest limits on magic: the inability to perform more than one magical Effect per turn. A mage can instruct a Talisman to activate one of its powers while he attempts some other feat of magic.

## PARADOX HANDLING

Most Talismans and Devices, like most Wonders, are considered Paradox Mitigating. In addition, they can use any of the forms of Paradox handling discussed in the Introduction. Few mages, however, are willing to turn their prized Talismans into dangerous traps. Also, since most mages prefer not to be parted from their Talismans or Devices, few create ones that could seriously harm their allies or companions.

Because of its close connection to its creator, a Talisman that accrues or absorbs Paradox can store Paradox generated by its mage, even when she performs magic that does not involve the Talisman, as long as she is in physical contact with it. This ability can be a great boon for mages, especially when desperate circumstances demand that the mage use large amounts of vulgar magic.

In addition, the fact that Talismans can act independently can be used to great advantage. A Talisman can perform one of its built-in Effects while the mage is talking or otherwise performing actions that will prevent Sleepers from noticing the vulgar magic that the Talisman is performing. If the Talisman vaporizes a security camera while everyone in the room is looking in the other direction, the result is vulgar magic-without-witnesses, as opposed to the vulgar magic-with-witnesses that would have resulted if the mage had simply waved his hands at the security camera and it had suddenly vaporized.

Fortunately, Talismans also have another option to deal with Paradox that other Wonders do not. Like certain Familiars, Talismans can possess the ability of Paradox Nullification (see **Guide to the Traditions** p. 218). For each Background point (or for every two experience points), the Talisman can nullify one point of Paradox every game session. No Talisman or Device can have more points put into this trait than it has dots of Arete. Also, the Talisman can only nullify Paradox it causes or that it has previously accrued/absorbed. It cannot simply nullify a portion of the mage's previously accumulated Paradox.

Talismans with the capability to nullify Paradox are far more efficient at bleeding off Paradox than ordinary Wonders. Every day it is left on a Node, the Talisman may make an Arete roll with a difficulty of 8 minus the rating of the Node, plus the number of points in Paradox Nullification it possesses; the minimum difficulty is 2.

Bleeding Paradox: Arete roll, difficulty 8 – (Node rating + Paradox Nullification points)

Each success on this roll removes one point of Paradox from the Talisman's store, in addition to the one point it naturally loses for being placed on a Node. As a result, the Talismans can lose as many as 3 or 4 points of Paradox a day. Wise mages keep their Talismans next to Nodes whenever they are not using them.

## USING ABANDONED TALISMANS

In the past, using abandoned Talismans rarely posed a serious problem, except for the possibility of being affected by the item's Resonance. The owner was

either dead, in which case the new owner had no competition for the Talisman's use, or the owner was alive, and a simple Correspondence Effect could determine this fact. Since using another mage's Talisman is an excellent way to be targeted by the owner's deadliest magics, mages who acquired another's Talisman would either return it, use it to target potent magics against the owner or destroy it. However, the beginning of the Avatar Storms killed or Gilguled a great many powerful mages and forced many others beyond the Gauntlet.

Unfortunately, the mages left on Earth have not been able to perform a complete census of the Masters who are still alive but now trapped beyond the Gauntlet. Moreover, some of these mages were unable to take their Talismans with them. Since only the most powerful mages were so trapped, a great many mages would dearly love to use the powerful Talismans they left behind. Since no one on Earth knows which of these Masters is still alive, using a Talisman created by one of the departed Masters is fraught with risk. Although using magic through the Gauntlet is difficult and erratic, some of the exiled Masters still attempt to monitor the actions of anyone using their Talismans. As a result, someone using one of these Talismans could find that the Talisman occasionally activates seemingly on its own, when its creator takes control of it. Also, mages using these Talismans can be the target of magic ranging from subtle mental influences to direct attacks, if the Master disapproves of the mage's actions. Worst of all, since using powerful Mind magic to pierce the Gauntlet does not incur damage or risk from the Avatar Storms, some exiled Masters temporally possess mages who are using or otherwise in contact with their Talismans.

Even if the Master is not actively spying on or working magic through her Talisman, owning such a Talisman can still be dangerous. A few Talismans have at least a rudimentary self-awareness and a strong desire to return to their creator. Since crossing the Gauntlet is quite dangerous, mages risk serious injury or death by carrying around an item that will do anything in its power to escape into the Umbra. Although most Talismans that contain the **Step Sideways** or **Breach the Gauntlet** rites have long since rejoined their Masters in the Umbra, some Talismans are simply biding their time. If a mage carrying such a Talisman botches a Spirit Effect, in addition to her other problems she may find that the Talisman has hijacked the residual Spirit energies. If the user has three or more dots in Spirit, the



Talisman will make an Arete roll and attempt to drag itself and the mage through the Gauntlet. Such attempts can also be triggered by a mage simply failing a roll when she opens a portal into the Gauntlet.

## CRAFTING TALISMANS

Crafting a Talisman is a process that is remarkably similar to crafting an Artifact (see pp. 15-25). Talismans are imbued with their own Arete, and their point cost is equal to their Arete rating plus 1 point per Effect and plus 1 point per 5 Quintessence they can store.

One adds additional powers to a Talisman much the same way as one imbues an Artifact with powers. Since a Talisman is already highly magical, however, it does not need to be purified, and the difficulty of adding any additional Effects is *lowered* by two because of its close tie to its creator. If anyone other than the Talisman's creator attempts to enchant it further, the difficulty of this process is *instead increased* by two.

## MATERIALS

The form of Talismans and Devices is somewhat different from the ones used with ordinary Artifacts and Inventions. Many mages choose to enchant one of their Foci as a Talisman, since this gives them an automatic -1 to all Effects that incorporate that Sphere. Also, Talismans are generally more complex and elaborate than ordinary Artifacts. Many Talismans are instantly recognizable as the work of a member of a particular Tradition. Some typical examples are given below.

### Akashic Brotherhood

There are two schools of thought for Akashic Talismans. Some members of this Tradition insist that all proper Talismans take the form of specialized martial arts weapons, the ritual garb of the wearer's particular sect of the Tradition or exquisitely made ritual tools like incense burners or calligraphy brushes. However, other Akashics, especially those whose foci are primarily actions or processes like meditation instead of physical items, seek simplicity in their relationship with the material world. These Akashics choose Talismans that are ordinary items like a sturdy hat or a well-made pair of shoes. Most of these Akashics deliberately ignore that members of the Euthanatos use similar Talismans for similar reasons (see below).

### Celestial Chorus

Common Talismans created by the Celestial Chorus are religious icons like large crosses or stars of David, or other religious paraphernalia like surplices or chalices. However, some Chorister Talismans are made instead out of liturgical garb or even the sort of

clothing that a pious and respectable member of the clergy might wear.

### Cult of Ecstasy

Few generalizations can be made about the Talismans created by Cultists of Ecstasy. Most are made from easily portable, commonplace items like guitars, wrist-watches, motorcycles, or even hats. The only unifying feature is that the item will either look highly whimsical or completely ordinary.

### Dreamspeakers

Many Dreamspeakers use natural items as their Talismans, like bones from an animal associated with their Totem, special crystals or rocks or branches taken from a particularly sacred location like a powerful Node. Elaborate and strange masks and costumes are also common, and some Dreamspeakers use small figurines made in the form of various powerful spirits they have encountered.

### Euthanatos

The most common Euthanatos Talismans are weapons. With forms that range from clubs to sniper rifles, Euthanatos see weapons as the special tools of entropy. Euthanatos who make Talismans that are not weapons almost always choose to create them in the form of easily portable, commonly used items that can be taken anywhere. With the increasing number of regulations against carrying weapons, many younger Euthanatos prefer to make their Talismans in the forms of items that are less problematic, like fountain pens, finely tooled leather belts, or pieces of jewelry.

### Hollow Ones

As with everything else, it is nearly impossible to make generalizations about the sort of Talismans the Hollow Ones use. Some fashion intricate and archaic Talismans modeled on those of the Hermetics or the Verbena, while others use tools of popular pseudo-occultism, like mass-produced dream catchers and ouija boards, or chakra wands set with garish pieces of colored glass. A few even make use of items borrowed from popular culture, like action figures or even t-shirts printed with odd symbols.

### Order of Hermes

Most Hermetics care deeply about the tools involved in their magic and usually make their Talismans from traditional foci like swords decorated with occult symbols, intricately carved staves and wands, gazing crystals made of precious materials and similar exotic items. The members of House Xaos use modern and mundane-looking versions of these same items, in part because they contend that traditional Talismans make users far too noticeable.

## Sons of Ether

Almost all Etherite Talismans are complex devices that have some obvious relation to their functions. A Talisman that serves as a focus for Forces magic and which contains several Forces Effects might be a ray gun-like device — with many settings and the ability to project energy — that can be used to both scan and attack.

## Verbena

Like those of the Order of Hermes, most Verbena Talismans take the form of the classical tools of western occultism. Cups, staves and wands are extremely popular, but the most common are knives and swords. More recently, younger Verbena have taken to making Talismans from jewelry adorned with pagan symbols.

## Virtual Adepts

Almost all Virtual Adept Talismans (or Devices) are either Trinary computers, computer peripherals or (more recently) wearable computers or accessories associated with them. Web phones and PDAs are becoming exceedingly popular Talismans.

## The Technocracy

Despite the differences between the various Conventions, Technocracy Devices are quite similar. They generally consist of complex pieces of portable technology with the clean and finished look of an expensive prototype. However, there are still significant differences between the types of Devices the members of various Conventions prefer.

Members of Iteration: X almost always create Devices that are either pieces of cyberware or hardsuits (see **Convention Book Iteration: X**, pp. 77-81). The most common are ADEIs (pp. 74-75) or Alanson Light Hardsuits (pp. 77-78). NWO and Syndicate agents almost always have exceedingly discreet Devices. These can include advanced cell phones, PDAs, briefcases, automobiles or even three-piece suits. These Devices will appear to be ordinary pieces of high-quality equipment suitable for either an intelligence agent or a wealthy businessperson. Researchers in the Progenitors often use some piece of advanced medical equipment like a cutting-edge medical kit or a portable chemical test kit used for on-scene criminal investigations. A few use ambulances or the laboratory vans used by organizations like the CDC that are also mobile sanctums. The Void Engineers have, in many ways, the most diverse range of options. Many use portable electronic sensors or hypertechnology weapons. However, some create their Devices out of lightweight space suits and a few have created Devices that are small, highly advanced voidcraft.

## PURIFICATIONS AND SPECIAL PREPARATIONS

Although most of the work spent creating a Talisman or Device is identical to that involved in creating a more ordinary Artifact or Invention, there is one step that is unique to these special Wonders. Talismans and Devices are extensions of their creator's magic and are directly connected to both their creator's spirit and their creator's Avatar. Forging this connection is the most difficult and challenging part of creating a Talisman.

### Step 1: Imbue Arete

The first part of this great work consists of instilling a piece of the mage's Avatar into the item. To do this, the creator must make an Arete roll against the standard difficulty (typically 8 for a Prime 3 vulgar Effect) once per hour. This is vulgar magic, and so the difficulty is reduced if the willworker creates her Talisman in her sanctum or in the Umbra.

Each successful roll requires that she incorporate a point of Tass into the Talisman and grant the item one point of Arete. A botch on any of these rolls renders the item useless and wastes all of the time and Tass the user has already spent.

If the user rolls a failure, she has two options. She can either end the creation of the item, giving it forevermore the number of points of Arete it currently possesses, or make another roll the next hour, in the hopes of obtaining another success. If she chooses the latter option, then the failure twists the Talisman and gives it a single one-point Flaw selected from either the main rulebook or the descriptions on pp. 19-20. This chosen flaw, however, does not lower the point cost of the Talisman, since it is taken in lieu of failure. If desired, each additional failure can either add another one-point Flaw or add an additional point to an existing Flaw. Flawed items can be quite powerful, but also dangerous and unreliable. Also, if one rolls a botch when creating an already Flawed item, not only is the item ruined, but the creator takes one die of aggravated damage for every point of Flaw the device possessed, as all of the magical energy in the device recoils in a potentially deadly backlash.

### Step 2: Imbue Powers

This step is like the Quickening stage of Artifact creation: the maker imbues the Talisman with magical powers. The mage need only accrue successes equal to the point value of the Effects (not twice the value, as with Artifacts).

Also, any Quintessence storage capability is now added (as per the rules for Periapts, pp. 39-43). Each five points of Quintessence storage adds one point to the Talisman's total point cost.

### Step 3: Bind the Will

To complete the Talisman, the creator must incorporate a portion of herself into the item. Different Traditions vary in approach to this feat. Almost all Verbena create this link with their own blood, often by boiling or soaking the item in their blood for several days, or even weeks. In contrast, a member of the Order of Hermes might inscribe the item with her True Name written in a secret magical language, while a Virtual Adept might instead etch his entire genetic code onto the item with a nanolaser. A few Euthanatos even incorporate a small portion of their own body, like the last joint of a little finger or little toe, into the item. Regardless of how this is done, this step begins the irrevocable process of tying the Talisman to the owner and providing it a piece of the mage's enlightened Will.

The completion of this step involves the maker sacrificing a point of her *permanent* Willpower to this Talisman. Because the mage ties herself physically to her Talisman, any willworker with Life 1 or higher can determine the identity of a Talisman's creator simply by scanning the Talisman.

### FLAWED TALISMANS

Flaws not only bring down the cost of a device, they can also be a natural consequence of their creation. In addition to the Flaws listed on pp. 19-20, one may use any Flaw described in either **Mage: The Ascension** or **The Guide to the Traditions**, provided that the player and the Storyteller can agree on a reasonable way for the Talisman or Device to produce this Flaw.

#### Flaws And Side Effects

All of these Flaws must have an actual impact on the character. A Talisman that gives the user the Nightmares Flaw only when she touches it, and which she only needs to use in combat, does not impair the user in any way and so this Flaw would not reduce the cost of the item. If the Flaw comes up almost as often as it would if the character actually possessed the Flaw, then it reduces the cost of the item by the listed amount. Otherwise, the Flaw does not reduce the cost of the Talisman or Device.

In general, if ceasing to use the item to avoid a Flaw doesn't create almost as much trouble as the Flaw itself, then the Flaw is not worth points. For example, a ring that allowed the user to disguise herself perfectly as someone else, but also rendered her completely mute, would subtract the 4-point Mute Flaw from the cost of the ring. The user could simply remove the ring and speak normally, but doing so would negate the disguise. However, a ring that allowed the user to teleport and which also rendered the user mute would not subtract

the cost of the Mute Flaw from its cost, since characters rarely need to teleport and talk at the same time.

Flaws that don't significantly impact the user add interest and character to an item, but do not reduce its cost. Such 0-point Flaws are known as Side Effects. An item may have as many Side Effects as are reasonable. If a Storyteller thinks that an item has particularly appropriate and interesting Side Effects, she can provide some minor benefit, like reducing the difficulty of one of the rolls involved in creating it by -1 or reducing the difficulty of one of the item's powers by -1.

## RESONANCE

Because they are tied so closely to their creators, all Talismans actually partake of a portion of their creator's Resonance. As a result, when he creates a Talisman, the creator subtracts a point from his highest Resonance trait (although it cannot drop below zero); this dot of Resonance is now permanently attached to the Talisman and will only return to the mage if the Talisman is destroyed. Any willworker who uses the Talisman gains one dot in that particular Resonance trait — this dot is cumulative with any similar variety of Resonance. A Talisman's Resonance trait can be increased over time. However, a Talisman cannot have a Resonance higher than 3 dots, and because they are fairly rigid items, they cannot have more than one type of permanent Resonance.

Unlike with other Wonders, when a mage or a Node with a different Resonance recharges a Talisman, it has no affect on the item's Resonance. However, repeatedly charging a Talisman from the same source will cause the Talisman to gain a temporary dot of Resonance associated with this source. This dot of Resonance fades as soon as the Talisman expends the Quintessence it gained from that source. Mages who wish to avoid gaining this secondary Resonance refill their Talismans from multiple sources.

Permanently changing a Talisman's Resonance is almost as difficult as changing the Resonance of a living mage. One must take extreme measures like performing lengthy and powerful purification rituals at the site of a powerful Node with the desired Resonance, placing the Talisman in the heart of a vile Umbral Labyrinth for a month or two, or taking the Talisman into a Technocracy laboratory and bombarding it with a stream of carefully modulated Prime energy for several weeks to alter a Talisman's Resonance.

In addition to adding to the user's Resonance, the Resonance of a Talisman can also have profound effects on the Talisman itself. Whenever the mage takes the Talisman into a situation that is closely aligned with its

Resonance, it may act independently of its owner. Examples of such situations include carrying a Talisman with an Angry Resonance into the middle of a riot, or carrying an item with a healing Resonance into a hospital ward full of plague victims. The Storyteller should roll one die for every point of Resonance the Talisman possesses, with a difficulty determined by both how closely the event matches the item's Resonance and the scale of the event. In the middle of a riot, a Talisman with Angry Resonance would have a difficulty of 3, while the same item would have a difficulty of 9 if it were near a domestic dispute where both parties were yelling and throwing small items. If this roll succeeds, then the Talisman will automatically use one of its powers in an appropriate manner without prompting by the mage. An item with Healing Resonance would attempt to heal or otherwise aid someone with a terminal disease, while an item with Angry Resonance would attempt to make a riot or argument worse. Such attempts are always simple and direct; Talismans are almost never able to perform complex actions or detailed plans on their own. Also, a Talisman cannot perform an independent action more often than once a day.

A Talisman's independent actions are completely under the Storyteller's control. While characters may place their Talismans in specific situations to attempt to cause the Talisman to act on its own, the final determination is up to the Storyteller and the dice. However, if the mage is touching the Talisman when it attempts to activate, a successful Perception + Awareness roll (difficulty 8) allows her to sense that the Talisman is about to activate an instant before it does so. She can either allow it to activate, or she can spend a point of temporary Willpower to prevent it from activating. Unfortunately, while the mage will know that the item is preparing to do something, she will not know what it is about to do. If the willworker gets three or more successes on this roll, she will have enough warning to use a Time 2 Effect to determine what the item will do, and still have a chance to stop it from going off.

## SAMPLE TRADITION TALISMAN

Tradition mages create a large and diverse assortment of Wonders. Members of the Technocracy generally consider these Wonders to be both unsafe and unreliable. Technocracy mages who acquire such Wonders are required to turn them over for evaluation to approved Technocracy research teams. A few unconventional Technocracy mages keep and use Tradition-made Wonders, but senior Technocrats will

confiscate these wonders and censure the owners if they ever discover this deception.

**Note:** Wonders with no listed Quintessence rating cannot store Quintessence points.

## DISGUISE HAT

### 3-point Wonder (Arete 3)

Many people say that clothing makes the man, and this hat proves the truth of the statement. Using a combination of a complex internal framework and fabric that is both easily stretchable and changes color when small amounts of electric current is applied, these hats can be transformed with a simple tap on the side into any of 10 separate hats of a wide variety of different styles. Typically, these hats are designed to have one or two fairly neutral forms, while the rest consist of a variety of professional hats. The list of available hats often include SWAT team helmets, police or military officer uniform hats, the conservative black hats FBI agents occasionally wear, the expensive designer beret of a Hollywood movie producer, and, occasionally, unusual choices like a chef's hat or a bishop's miter.

Observers perceive that the wearer's clothes fit with the hat — ordinary clothes look like an official police uniform and an ordinary driver's license in the wearer's wallet appears to be an official FBI ID, given the right hat. In addition, that hat even changes the user's appearance to match the assumed identity, making the wearer look older, more respectable, or occasionally even changing his apparent gender.

Disguise hats, however, are incapable of disguising the user as a specific other person. Perceptual Physicist Dr. Laura Watkins of the Sons of Ether and Donald Chen, a professional actor and Akashic monk, worked together to create the first of these hats.

**System:** The wearer must touch the hat; the player then rolls the hat's Arete of 3 with a difficulty of 6 to switch the hat from one of its 10 forms to another. The instant the hat switches form, powerful Mind Effects that the hat produces cause everyone looking at the viewer to match his clothing to the hat. One success on this roll allows the wearer to maintain the illusion for a scene, while two or more successes allows the user to maintain this new appearance until she ceases touching the hat. Unless two or more of the hat's 10 forms are both quite similar and not designed to alter the wearer's appearance, the wearer is not recognizable once the hat has changed. The 10 identities in the hat are all fixed when it is manufactured, and can only be changed by achieving two or more successes on a Matter 3, Mind 3 Effect with a difficulty of 6, combined with a successful

Dexterity + Crafts (clothing or costume), difficulty 6. Mind magic can protect viewers from being deceived by the hat's illusions.

## FAERIE CAP

### 6-point Wonder (Arete 3)

Although the original items were always simple peaked caps made of bright red cloth, Verbena now make this Wonder in the form of almost any sort of hat imaginable. The Verbena are the only mages who create these hats. According to legend, these hats were first created more than 1,000 years ago, when a Verbena stole and copied a similar cap worn by a faerie. In honor of their origins, almost all of these hats are dyed either red or green.

In addition to being an exceptionally useful device, Verbena, Dreamspeakers, and members of the Cult of Ecstasy who have or wish to have ties with the Fae wear these hats as a symbol of their allegiance. Since many Fae can sense that these hats were based upon their own magical creations, they naturally take an interest in anyone who wears one. Wearers who do not already have ties to the Fae usually either gain ties with them through bargains and pledges of mutual aid, or find that the Fae are, for some reason, unwilling to accept them.

**System:** Regardless of their form, these hats allow the wearer to exist in any environment. From the depths of the sea to the vacuum of space, and from the frozen arctic to the blazing hot deserts of the equator, the wearer will remain both comfortable and safe. This hat, however, does not protect the wearer from rain or other liquid, nor does it allow the wearer to move more easily in whatever environment she presently occupies. If someone wearing one of these hats dives deep into the ocean, she will still get wet and will still need to swim. If the wearer removes this hat, the protection it provides will remain for one full turn, allowing her a chance to retrieve it. Grabbing this hat off of someone who is in deep space won't kill the wearer instantly, but she will die within a few minutes. The best-made versions of these hats also keep the wearer well nourished, so she can survive indefinitely without air, water or food. Although the wearer remains slightly hungry and thirsty for as long as she lacks access to real food and drink, these hats can keep the wearer alive anywhere for as long as needed.

## FOLDING GATE OF ARITHAGHAST

### 10-point Wonder (Arete 4, Quintessence 10)

No one knows the origins of these rare and powerful items. Some say that an Ahl-i-Batin in the midst of the mythic age created them; others believe that a super-

nally adept alchemist made these Wonders in the early 16th century. Regardless of their true origin, it appears that some long-lived mage actually mastered the secret of creating portable Nodes. Even better, these nodes are located inside portal sanctums. This anonymous mage created seven folding gates that have lasted until the present day.

No one knows how these items were made. Several contemporary Virtual Adepts have managed to create virtual sanctums that can be physically accessed through Correspondence magics, but no one else has managed to create easily portable Nodes. The actual item normally looks like a small metal box about the size of a softball. It appears to be made of a series of thin metal rods that are square in cross section. This box unfolds into a narrow, rectangular gateway three feet across and seven feet high. When fully unfolded, this rectangle stands on its own. When activated, the rectangle becomes a gateway into the sanctum, consisting of two good-sized rooms. Normally, one serves as a workroom and the other as a bedroom. The owner can outfit these rooms using Forces and Matter magics. However, even without additional magic, the rooms provide light, comfortable temperatures, fresh air and water as well as adequate plumbing. If properly outfitted, the rooms can house up to three people indefinitely and up to eight for an exceptionally cramped night or two.

No one has any idea how to duplicate these items. As a result, all seven of these gates inspire vast amounts of envy. Almost every willworker would love to have access to a portable sanctum that she can easily carry from place to place, or even one that someone else can carry while the mage rides safely and unnoticeably inside. One mage even mailed this box from France to Burma with himself and two companions inside, easily avoiding the Interpol and Technocracy agents who were searching for them. Anyone who owns one of these devices keeps this fact a secret from all but her closest companions. If word gets out that someone has one of these Wonders, the owner should expect thieves to begin gathering.

**System:** The gate is quite complex; the user must make an Intelligence + Enigmas roll with a difficulty of 7 to correctly unfold the gate. Once the gate has been unfolded, the user must spend a point of Quintessence and roll the Talisman's Arete of 4 with a difficulty of 7 minus the number of successes on the previous roll (to a maximum of 3), all while touching the gate. If this roll is successful, the user opens a Hermes Portal into the sanctum. Even better, once inside, tugging on the gateway will collapse it back into a small box in the outside world. Inside the sanctum, a door made of a

sturdy metal lattice closes. Anyone inside the sanctum can then lock this door so that no one without Correspondence 4 or higher can open it. Once the owner has spent Quintessence to open the gate and entered the sanctum, the sanctum attunes itself to her. The item will remain attuned until someone else opens it and spends Quintessence to activate it.

Anyone who attunes this item will automatically find the 2-point sanctum inside to be completely compatible with her paradigm. Each of the sanctum's two rooms is approximately five yards long, four wide, and three yards high. The second room contains a 2-point Node against the far wall. Until the owner outfits these rooms, this Node is merely a low metal pillar on which sits a dimly glowing sphere the size of a cherry. In addition to being able to absorb Paradox, this item possesses one point of Paradox Nullification. Because it is attached to a Node, the user rolls its Arete of 4 once a day with a difficulty of 4. Each success eliminates one point of Paradox from the device.

Attacking the sanctum inside the box merely damages this space but does not harm the item. However, attacking the gateway itself can destroy this item and may kill everyone inside. Any attack on the box or gateway can be felt inside — wise users will leave immediately. If the box or gateway is destroyed, all fragments of it instantly vanish and everyone inside must make an Arete roll with a difficulty of 7. Success allows the character and anything or anyone he is touching to appear suddenly where the Talisman just was. Failing this roll means that the character is never seen again — unless she was touching a character who successfully escapes.

## LUCKY COIN

### 8-point Wonder (Arete 3, Quintessence 5)

Although mages in all Traditions have created similar Wonders, this version, first created by Victorian con-artist and Cult of Ecstasy member Joseph Zimmer, is one of the most popular. This Wonder is a perpetually shiny coin engraved with a number of small mandalas. To work, the coin must be visible, and is usually set in a ring or a pendant. A few highly dexterous Cultists instead continually flip the coin between their fingers. This item is specifically designed to bring the owner money. It helps the user in all forms of gambling, regardless of whether she is playing the lottery, Russian roulette or the stock market. Also, it allows the owner to be able to talk anyone into almost any proposition involving giving the user money. Whether the owner is asking for a job, a handout, or is running a con, the subject will find it hard to resist the owner's pitch.

**System:** Whenever the user gambles, she may roll the item's Arete of 3. A single success means the mage increases her odds of winning by up to a factor of 10. A coin toss will usually go in her favor and she will win at roulette about one time in three. Each additional success further increases her odds by a factor of 10 — three successes will almost guarantee that the owner will win at least a moderate amount of money when playing the lottery. In addition, the owner reduces by three the difficulty of all Leadership, Performance, or Subterfuge rolls designed to obtain money. Finally, all manner of minor financial coincidence will favor the owner, effectively giving him Resources 2 for as long as he owns the coin. This Resources score is not added to any existing Resources the owner possesses. To further aid the user, most of these coins also hold a small amount of Quintessence. Users often talk about "recharging the coin's luck" by placing it on a Node for a while.

## MASK OF SILENT DEATH

### 7-point Wonder (Arete 3)

These masks are one of the more common items that Euthanatos assassins created and use. They provide one of the most useful Abilities that any assassin can possess — the power to remain unnoticed. Older versions of this item were made from wooden masks or black leather domino masks. Most contemporary versions, however, are created from ski masks or even nylon stockings. A mask of silent death renders the wearer inhumanly stealthy through Forces and Entropy magics, and steadies his hand and gaze so that he can strike devastatingly lethal blows. Anyone wearing one of these masks announces himself as a working assassin, and among the Euthanatos, only members who have helped at least one person along to their "perfect completion" is regarded as worthy of wearing a mask of silent death. Wearing one of these masks, however, tends to make members of other Traditions somewhat nervous — few outsiders are comfortable keeping company with assassins.

**System:** Anyone wearing this mask decreases the difficulty of all Stealth rolls by three. In addition, if the character uses the aiming maneuver or attacks an unsuspecting target, the wearer can also roll the mask's Arete of 3 with a difficulty of 4; each success reduces the difficulty of the damage roll for the attack by one.

## MATTER TRANSITION PORTAL

### 7-point Wonder, 5 if haunted (Arete 4, Quintessence 5)

These devices create a portal that the user can both see through and walk through. The device itself con-

sists of a narrow desk covered with controls set against a large machine, which is two feet thick, seven feet tall and 10 yards long. Directly above the desk is a circular screen where the user can view distant locations. To the right of the desk is a narrow chrome circle two meters in diameter, set flush into the black metal of the Device. When a portal is opened, the space inside this ring swirls with light and anyone can walk through it to a destination anywhere in the universe, and anyone on the other side can also walk through. However, the portal is nearly invisible on the other side and is visible as a faintly glowing ring only if the light is dim in the space in which it appears.

This Device comes with a dozen simple portal locators, which Etherites usually make in the form of rings or pens. Anyone carrying one of these devices can rapidly locate any portal within 100 meters. These locators also function as remote controls and allow an individual to open a portal to her own location, allowing her to return instantly to the Device's location.

First developed in Philadelphia in 1943, these devices are quite common among Cybernauts, Mad Scientists and Adventurers. Lately, they have also become popular among some members of the Virtual Adepts, especially among the Reality Hackers. A number of Reality Hackers have developed close ties to Cybernauts in the hopes of persuading them to build them one of these Devices. Before the Avatar Storm, a few Ethernauts modified these devices to function as portals into the Umbra, as well. Since entering the Umbra without a shallowing now risks serious injury, most of these portals have been modified so that they instead lower the local Gauntlet sufficiently to create an artificial shallowing. Since these portals are often built on small Nodes, it is not too difficult to create artificial shallowings.

**System:** To locate a specific person or place using the portal, the user must first adjust the device by making an Intelligence + Technology roll with a difficulty of 5 to see a location, and a difficulty of 7 to actually open a portal. After making this roll, the user rolls the Device's Arete of 4, subtracting one from the difficulty for every success on the Intelligence + Technology roll (to a maximum of -3). Use the Correspondence Ranges chart to determine the number of successes the user must obtain. Both uses of the Device remain active for one full scene.

If the user rolls well enough to open a portal, she can leave the portal closed for a time and simply observe the location, without needing to make a second roll to open the portal later in the scene. This device con-

sumes one point of Quintessence every time it is used; the owner can power it with her own Quintessence or from the unit's small power pack. However, many users build this device on small Nodes. A Node with a rating of one or more provides all the Quintessence needed to operate the Device. While mages may still use this Node to regain Quintessence, however, the Node produces less Tass. Treat any Node attached to one of these Devices as having a rating of two less than normal for purposes of producing Tass. If the user places this Device in her sanctum, using it to view other locations is always coincidental, and using it to open a portal to another location may be coincidental as long as no one observes anyone entering or leaving the exit portal.

Some portals made since the start of the Avatar Storms have developed a disturbing quirk (the 2-point *Echoes Flaw*); these form natural gateways that allow minor ghosts and spirits to manifest near the Devices. Even when a Device is turned off, items in the owner's laboratory sometimes move when she is out. Occasionally, more severe problems occur, including small items flying through the air. Sometimes, important gadgets or items like the owner's wallet will "accidentally" fall out of the user's pocket and remain behind when he walks through the portal. None of these spirits are dangerous or hostile, but their actions can sometimes seriously inconvenience the user. Etherites who create or inherit one of these Devices usually add other capabilities to it, including advanced computers that can serve as either familiars or mentors. When combined with either an encrypted web phone or even a computer and a cell phone, it can serve as an ideal focus for all types of Correspondence magics.

## MENTAL ENHANCEMENT GLASSES

**7-Point Wonder, 8 if Trinary Palmtop included (Arete 3, Quintessence 5)**

Many Virtual Adepts envy the Advanced DEIs their rivals in Iteration: X (**Convention Book Iteration: X**, pp. 74-75) possess, but few Virtual Adepts are interested in such highly invasive cyberware. A few VAs have created their own versions of the Iteration: X MPCI (**Convention Book Iteration: X**, p. 85), most of which avoid any sort of implant, trusting instead in hyper-advanced peripherals. The MEG is the latest bleeding-edge peripheral the Cypherpunks have developed. It is already the gear to own for all the early adopters within the Virtual Adepts.

The main portion of the MEG is a set of ordinary-looking glasses. Because they actually have a great deal of nanocircuitry imbedded inside their frames, all MEG

units are made with wide, opaque plastic frames — “nerd glasses” that actually make the user more intelligent. These glasses act as VR glasses for any computer fitted with a wireless screen interface and function as multi-spectrum viewers. The unit also contains a miniature video camera that can photograph everything the user sees. In addition, the temple contacts allow the circuitry to interface directly with the user’s brain, boosting memory, calculating power and speed of thought by effectively adding the unit’s processing and storage power to the user’s.

Most MEG units also come with a powerful palmtop Trinary computer. The user can either use the palmtop normally, or she can control it using the MEG’s temple contacts and display information on the insides of the lenses. This palmtop’s 10 Gigs of RAM and the 500 terabyte hard drive gives the user nearly unlimited storage. This computer comes equipped with both pre-installed hacking software and a wireless modem that can also function as a cell phone. This modem can also transmit real-time video images from the MEG’s camera to any other computer or web phone with which it is in contact. Anyone using a MEG, especially if they also have the trinary palmtop, automatically gains considerable status among other Virtual Adepts because these units are still quite new.

**System:** The MEG gives the user the equivalent of the *Eidetic Memory Merit* (**Mage**, p. 292). Users also gain the *Lightning Calculator* and *Time Sense* Merits (**Mage**, p. 291). The glasses also serve as multi-spectrum viewers that act as light intensifiers and can make both infrared and ultraviolet light visible to the user. Users suffer no vision or mobility penalties even when in complete darkness, and reduce the difficulty of all visual perception rolls by -2. The built-in photo-gray capability also allows MEGs to function as sunglasses.

When the unit is connected to a computer, the user can roll the MEG’s Arete of 3, difficulty of 5, to reduce the difficulty of any hacking rolls made using this Talisman. Each success reduces the difficulty of a single hacking roll by 1.

Users also gain two mental actions per turn. They can write a complex program or plan a dinner party during an animated conversation or a fast-paced gunfight, with no penalty to either thoughts or actions. However, a user can still only cast one spell per turn and he does not gain more than one physical action a turn without suffering dice pool penalties.

When used together, the MEG and the palmtop trinary computer allow the user to gain sensory access to the

Digital Web (see **The Digital Web**, pp. 36-37) as well as lowering the difficulty of all hacking rolls by an additional -1. Many Virtual Adepts use the MEG + Trinary Palmtop combination as a focus for almost all of their magics.

## THE CHRONONAL WATCH

### 10-point Wonder (Arete 5, Quintessence 15)

This is perhaps the most potent time-controlling Wonder known. Jules Dupree, the previous leader of the Dissonance Faction of the Cult of Ecstasy who vanished mysteriously in 1969, invented it. Dupree made the watch in 1910 and kept it with him constantly. Everyone thought it disappeared when he did, until it reappeared in 1974 in a thrift store in Detroit. This item chooses owners who are practicing anarchists and who live outside of the social mainstream. If the owner ever turns his back on his principles and gets a normal job or becomes either wealthy or greedy, the watch finds a new owner. The new owner will simply come across the watch and realize that it is magical. The first time the owner uses the Device, she will instantly know the Geasa placed on it. Unable to work a normal job and with the ability to stop time at will, the owner generally turns to crime to support himself and frequently gives away portions of what he steals. This sort of activity is perfectly in line with Dupree’s ideals. Even today, he can turn the owner of this exceptionally precious Talisman into his disciple.

**System:** This watch allows the owner to speed himself up, using the Time 3 **Distort Time** Effect. The owner need only roll the Talisman’s Arete of 5 with a difficulty of 6; every two successes gives her one extra action. This Effect lasts for one scene. Since excessive use of Time Effects can cause premature aging, this item also stops the wearer’s own biological clock and keeps him from aging as long as he owns this watch. However, the watch’s most powerful Effect is the **Sidestep Time** rote. By simply pulling up on the watch’s stem and flicking a concealed lever, the user can place himself outside of time. This Effect only works for the user and lasts for one full scene (for the user). No rolls are needed to use this power, but each use requires three points of Quintessence from the watch’s internal Periapt. This Periapt holds 15 points of Quintessence, which can only be used to power this Effect. Also, the owner must use this Quintessence — he cannot use any other source of Quintessence to power this Effect. The watch requires frequent recharging.

The owner also suffers from two Geasa. The first is a 3-point Geas: If the owner ever works a job for a pay

that lasts longer than a day, including different jobs for the same employer, the watch vanishes and finds another owner. Panhandling, day labor, theft, making a living as an entertainer (as long as the owner never signs a long-term contract of any sort), and similar fringe occupations do not count as jobs. The second is a 2-point Geas: The watch finds another owner if the owner ever possesses a Resources rating higher than three dots or if he ever refuses to help someone in need when he has the money to do so. Almost everyone who has ever owned this watch also uses it as a Unique Focus for other Time magics.

## THE ORB OF HONORUS

### 8-point Wonder (Arete 4, Quintessence 5)

Created in the 13<sup>th</sup> century by the Hermetic enchanter Regnum, this dread item was made using Tass from the blood of seven powerful and insane vampires. It is a blood red sphere the size of a large cherry set on a jet-black chain. It makes the wearer immortal and gives her the power to command the wills of others. However, it is also deeply corrupt and there is an ancient sect of vampire hunters dedicated to destroying both it and its user. The user can command others with great ease and can make those she commands do almost anything short of committing suicide. Both elder vampires and the Technocracy see this unique item as a serious threat to their power and would dearly love to acquire it.

**System:** Because the item was made using the blood of several exceptionally powerful vampires, the user gains the *Iron Will*, *Unaging* and *Unbondable* Merits. However, the item's primary power is a Mind 4 Effect that allows the wearer to command others verbally. The wearer need only make a Manipulation + Leadership roll with a difficulty of 6. Then, the Talisman rolls its Arete of 4 with a difficulty of 7 minus the number of successes rolled on the previous roll. One success allows the wearer to compel the target to take any action that she has no moral or ethical objections to and which also does not directly harm the target. Rolling three or more successes allows the user to force the target to perform any action except committing suicide.

Unless the target is either warded against Mind magics or spends a point of Willpower and rolls a number of successes on a Willpower roll (difficulty of 7) equal to the number rolled by the user, she will obey this command. Since resisting each command requires an additional expenditure of Willpower, the owner can eventually wear down the will of any being. Also, while none of the item's powers require Quintessence, it can

hold a small amount of Quintessence. In addition to being able to draw it from Nodes, it will also gain one point of Quintessence from being soaked in a pint of blood from a vampire or a Ghoul. Also, to maintain the wearer's immortality, the orb must be soaked in a quart of freshly drained blood of a human, ghoul or vampire once every season.

As a side effect of its creation from vampiric Tass, the user gains the *Nightmares* Flaw — she frequently dreams of vampires and bloodletting. Unfortunately, if the user takes the orb off when she sleeps she will age during this time. Also, this orb is both infamous and hated and so the wearer also gains the *Witch-Hunted* Flaw. Users also find that this item automatically becomes their Unique Focus for all Mind magics. Unlike most Talismans, users cannot choose whether or not to take this Talisman a focus. If they wear it for more than nine days it bonds to them and automatically becomes their focus.

## ROBES OF BLESSING

### 9-point Wonder (Arete 4, Quintessence 10)

These Talismans are some of the most popular and powerful items the Celestial Chorus creates. The first of these robes was created more than 500 years ago and took the form of priest's robes. Choristers still occasionally use various forms of religious garb as the basis for the item, but they now make the majority of them from quality (but somewhat conservative) suits of dress clothing. While worn, the clothes increase the wearer's determination and charisma. Additionally, everyone who interacts with the wearer treats her as someone who is both important and holy. The Celestial Chorus regards these robes as their own property and will not sell or give them to any member of another Tradition. However, since non-mages can use these robes, the Choristers occasionally loan them to sorcerers and other non-mages who work closely with the Tradition and who are already skilled orators and powerful religious speakers. All members of the Celestial Chorus will recognize one of these sets of clothes on a successful Perception + Awareness roll with a difficulty of 7 and will assume that anyone wearing one of these items is a Chorister or a close ally. To ensure that this is the case, all such robes are imprinted with a Geas that renders them useless if the wearer ever betrays the principles of the Celestial Chorus.

Since the Choristers only give these robes to members who are both skilled and trustworthy, any Chorister who sees someone wearing this item will regard the wearer as someone of great import. Wearers of this garb can call on the aid of fellow members of the Celestial

Chorus solely on the strength of their wearing these robes. Choristers will treat any non-member found wearing robes of blessing as both a thief and an enemy.

**System:** Wearing these robes gives the wearer the *Iron Will* Merit and one additional dot in both Expression and Performance (cumulative with any scores in those Abilities that the wearer already possesses). In addition, the wearer gains an automatic Resources Background of one dot, because people generally do not ask her to pay for low-cost items — the wearer will be able to do quite well if begging. This Resources Background is not cumulative with any level of Resources the character already possesses.

This item projects an aura of holiness about the wearer. The item's primary power is a Mind 4 Effect that allows the wearer to convince others of the rightness of her cause. The wearer need only make a Charisma + Expression roll with a difficulty of 6. Then, the Talisman rolls its Arete of 4 with a difficulty of 7 minus the number of successes rolled on the previous roll. One success allows the wearer to convince everyone she talks to of any reasonably plausible point of view or cause the target to believe a somewhat-likely lie. Rolling three or more successes on the Arete roll allows the user to cause everyone she is addressing to believe literally anything. Also, this aura also causes people to see the wearer as someone holy and important and gives her an Influence of 2 dots (not cumulative with any other Influence the wearer may possess).

However, these robes also come with a 3-point Geas. If the wearer ever harms or refuses to aid an innocent or a loyal member of the Celestial Chorus who is in need of help, the robes fall off of her and can never be put back on until she confesses her sin to a senior member of the Celestial Chorus and is given absolution.

## RÖD ÖF HOLY CLEANSING

### 8-point Wonder (Arete 4, Quintessence 20)

Although the Celestial Chorus normally focuses its efforts on creation and on aiding humanity, all but the most naïve members realize that creation and destruction go hand in hand, and that Choristers must be prepared to defend themselves and to fight back against those dangers and abominations that threaten humanity. This item, normally made in the form of a cane, a walking stick or occasionally a riding crop, can drain all Quintessence from any non-living item up to the size of a vault door or a large van. In a few moments, the item completely disintegrates into nothingness, the only evidence of its passing being a faint pale glow that

dissipates rapidly. If used to strike a person, it destroys everything that she is wearing, holding or carrying, but leaves her completely unharmed. This item is exceptionally popular with pacifists who wish to work against the Technocracy, since it is especially good at rendering Technocracy operatives harmless — no Technocrat can work magic if he is completely deprived of all of his tools. As a side benefit, every item destroyed in this fashion releases a small amount of Quintessence and the rod contains a Periapt capable of storing the energies released by destruction.

**System:** To activate the rod, the user must touch it to the item and make an Arete roll with a difficulty of 7. One success allows the user to destroy any item up to the size of a large briefcase or all clothing and small gadgets a person is wearing or holding. Two successes allow the user to destroy an object up to the size of a normal door, a motorcycle or an Iteration: X Hardsuit (**Convention Book: Iteration: X**, pp. 77-81) or everything that a person is wearing and carrying. Three or more successes allows the user to destroy anything up to the size of a van, a stretch limousine, or a heavy vault door. Each success on this roll also fills the rod's Periapt with one point of Quintessence. The Periapt has a maximum capacity of 20 points of Quintessence. Items that require more than one success to destroy take two full turns to completely vanish. The Quintessence is only released once the item is completely destroyed; even if the Periapt is already full, the user may utilize any Quintessence that is released in a rote performed during that turn. Otherwise, all additional Quintessence is lost. If the user does not roll enough successes to completely destroy a large item, the item is not partially destroyed. Instead, ordinary objects become somewhat worn and pitted and complex devices cease working until they are repaired. Most Choristers who own such rods also use them as Unique Foci for all Prime magics.

## SHURIKEN GLOVE

### 5-point Wonder (Arete 3, Quintessence 5)

Designed to focus the user's chi into a bolt of semisolid force that he can throw, this is one of the oldest Wonders still in common use. Legend says that the first of these gloves were created centuries before the ancient war that led to the continuing distrust between the Akashic Brotherhood and the Euthanatos. According to these ancient tales, long ago an Akashic mystic and a Euthanatos weapon-smith worked together to create a powerful and deadly item that members of both Traditions could easily use.



For many centuries after the 300-year war between these two Traditions, few on either side used this item because it symbolized a prior unity that the members of both Traditions now deeply regretted. Eventually, some deemed the item too valuable not to use and members of both Traditions began making and using them again. However, each Tradition made certain that their shuriken gloves were quite different from the ones made by their enemies. The shuriken gloves the Akashic Brotherhood made were most often short, fingerless gloves of heavy cotton and silk, while the Euthanatos usually created long, black leather gloves. Both varieties of glove had a complex sigil on the palm. This sigil served to focus the user's chi or prana energy. These traditions of manufacture continue to the present day.

Recently, younger members of both Traditions who wish to finally put their distrust of the other Tradition behind them have taken to making these gloves in the style of the other Tradition. A member of either Tradition who wears one of the other Tradition's shuriken gloves is openly announcing his

willingness to renounce all residual hostility between these two ancient groups.

**System:** The user need only wear the glove and mimic throwing a shuriken while visualizing a bolt of glowing energy flying from his hand. If the user succeeds at a normal Dexterity + Firearms roll, the shuriken strikes its target. The user must then roll the glove's Arete of 3 with a difficulty of 6. The shuriken does two levels of Lethal damage for each success + one additional level of damage because the glove uses Forces magic. In addition, the user should add any additional successes from the attack roll as additional damage dice. Like ordinary shuriken (*Mage: The Ascension* pp. 242-244), the user can throw more than one of these chi-based shuriken at once — each additional shuriken after the first adds one to the damage roll and subtracts one from the attack roll. Since shuriken are small and easy to conceal, most attacks with this device are coincidental, as long as no one wonders why there's no shuriken sticking in the wound. Shuriken gloves are also frequently used as foci for any magical attack involving the user's hands.

## SPIRIT DOOR

### 10-point Wonder (Arete 4, Quintessence 5)

Since the beginning of the Avatar Storm, the Dreamspeakers have been attempting to find a way around its dangers. While creating artificial shallowings in regions with a low Gauntlet rating has become one of the most common ways for Dreamspeakers to safely enter or leave the Umbra, this item provides an exciting new alternative that does not require the use of shallowings, totems or familiars.

The powerful and ancient shaman Tasygan (**Tradition Book: Dreamspeakers**, pp. 75-76) first developed this Talisman after she had a vision of the mysterious Psychopomps, and she recently taught her assistants and apprentices how to duplicate it. These items are quite rare, and Tasygan must personally instruct everyone who wishes to create one. As a result, only Dreamspeakers who have Tasygan as a Mentor or a Contact can own one. Most such Dreamspeakers are members of the Baruti. These items are always hand-woven carpets made of wool. Most are approximately two to three yards long and one yard wide. The centers of all of these carpets contain earth-colored designs representing the Umbra, and the borders have patterns that resemble open doors or gateways. When activated, the spirit door forms an actual gateway into the spirit world. Users must either hang it on the wall and step through it like a doorway or lay it on the floor and kneel and crawl into or out of the Umbra on their hands and knees.

**System:** These items give the user both the 5-point version of the *Storm Warden* Merit (**Mage** p. 295) and the **Breach the Gauntlet** rote. The *Storm Warden* Merit only operates if the owner actually uses this item's Arete to open a gateway into the spirit world. To use the carpet to create such a gateway, the shaman must be in an area where the Gauntlet difficulty is 6 or less (she may use her own Spirit magic to temporarily lower the Gauntlet rating). The user then rolls the door's Arete score and must score two or more successes to create an opening to or from the Gauntlet. Since the Spirit Door exists in both the material and the Umbral world, the user can pull it into or out of the Umbra once she has stepped through.

## SWORDS OF MARS

### 6-point Wonder, 8 if ungeased (Arete 2, Quintessence 10)

Made of magically purified iron and carefully engraved with a series of astrological symbols, the weaponsmiths of the Order of Hermes regard these

weapons as the finest examples of their craft. These blades are in great demand by Hermetics, as well as by the more traditionally minded Euthanatos and those martially inclined Verbena who prefer to use swords instead of daggers in their rituals. Unlike other enchanted weapons the Order creates, the Hermetic weapon-smiths of House Verditius create these blades solely for worthy champions who pledge themselves to defend the Traditions and to act as just and honorable warriors. Some of these blades are simply exceptionally fine weapons. Most, however, are geased so that they turn on their bearer if he ever acts in a dishonorable manner by betraying allies without warning, abandoning comrades in a fight or fighting against the Traditions. All swords of Mars are made of fine damascened steel with scarlet magical and alchemical symbols worked into the blades; they are obvious in appearance, and every mage who sees one knows that its rightful owner is a true and just person.

**System:** Most of these blades are enchanted with Entropy, Forces, and Matter magics so that they reduce the difficulty of all attack, parry and damage rolls by three and increase the difficulty of all of the target's soak rolls by three. These powers require neither rolls nor Quintessence. If the user rolls the sword's Arete of 2 with a difficulty of 5, it can also amplify the power of the wielder's swing and add standard Forces damage to the blow. Increasing the power of a blow requires one point of Quintessence. Geased swords of Mars are enchanted with a 2-point Geas so that if the user fails to act in the manner described above, the sword loses all of these bonuses and automatically transforms any failed attack or defense roll into a botch. This curse continues until the user both admits to and atones for his crime to a senior member of her Tradition. Hermetic mages often use swords as foci for destructive Matter or Entropy magics and this sword is an ideal Unique Focus for these purposes.

## VISION JEWEL

### 4-point Wonder (Arete 2)

Members of the Order of Hermes often enchant jewels and other stones, especially for use in various forms of scrying. Prior to the 20<sup>th</sup> century, most Hermetics used enchanted showstones, crystal balls or similar items to aid in feats of far-seeing. However, in 1961, Juliana Marlin created the first vision jewel. She claims the inspiration came from a comic book. Although many in the Order scoff at the idea of this sort of plebian



entertainment serving as a template for working the Great Art, all admit that this item is exceedingly useful. Although vision jewels are riskier and more obvious than crystal balls, they are also far more reliable and easier to use than the traditional crystal ball. A vision jewel is a polished sphere of emerald or aquamarine that ranges in size from an olive to a golf ball and is inscribed with mystic sigils. Whenever the user wishes, this sphere can fly through the air to any desired destination. The stone cannot move faster than 40 mph unless someone who is moving faster than this carries it. Although the jewel moves too slowly to do any damage, it is still useful because the user can sense through the stone and also send spells through his link to the stone.

**System:** The jewel is imbued with powerful Correspondence magics (Correspondence Sensing) that allow the user to automatically see and hear everything occurring in the Jewel's vicinity. The natural link between a Talisman and its owner further enhances this magic. The user can perceive the scene around the jewel just as if he was standing in the jewel's place. In addition, the user can cast any spells through the stone. Unfortunately, the stone is relatively easy to see (roll Perception + Alertness at difficulty 8 to notice the stone, even if the user is attempting to move it stealthily) and easy to find with magic. Any mage who discovers this stone can use it as a link to the user and can send spells through the link. These spells affect the user just as if the attacker were standing right next to the user. To avoid such spells, the user can either attempt to move the jewel away from the attacker or he can break his link to the sphere. Doing the latter is an instantaneous reflexive action, but the sphere then falls to the ground and the user must retrieve it with either mundane or magical means before he can use it again. Many Hermetics who own one of these items also use it as a Unique Focus for all of their Correspondence magics.

## WAND OF HEALTH

### 4-point Wonder (Arete 4)

Members of both the Order of Hermes and the Verbena use slightly different versions of this Wonder. The original design is ancient, dating back to when members of these two groups were much closer than they are today.

The item itself is typically a wand of wood, bone or metal, encircled by a pair of carved serpents that can be made of anything from wood to plastic. The wand of health can speed the healing of any wound or injury on the user or one of his patients. The wand can also transfer health from the user to the patient, which can greatly speed healing and save the lives of the critically

injured. Also, in accordance with the mystical laws behind both Hermetic and Verbena magic, the item can be used to drain health from others to aid the user.

Among the Verbena, only witches who swear to devote themselves to healing use these wands. Bearing one is a sacred trust and users of these wands are expected by members of the Verbena to use them responsibly and to attempt to heal any innocents who are hurt. To symbolize this commitment to healing, Verbena steep the wand in their own blood for a full lunar month.

Unfortunately, members of the Order of Hermes are under no such restrictions, and many Verbena are deeply upset by the fact that Hermetics often use items of great import in a way that the Verbena consider to be both irreverent and irresponsible. The Verbena expect any member of the Order of Hermes who carries one of these wands to provide aid and comfort to the sick and injured and not to use the wand in a selfish manner. Hermetics who behave in this way will gain respect and acceptance by many Verbena. Verbena regard Hermetics who defy this code as unworthy of either trust or aid.

**System:** When the owner touches this wand to a patient, it greatly speeds the patient's healing. The user rolls the wand's Arete of 4 with a difficulty of 4. Each success allows the target to heal a bashing or lethal Health Level of damage two categories faster on the Health Chart (Mage: The Ascension p. 247). However, regardless of the amount by which this device speeds healing, each Health Level takes at least one hour to heal. The wand also helps patients recover from all diseases: one success cures the disease in four days, and each additional success halves this recovery time. The difficulty of the Arete roll to cure a disease is the Toxin Rating of the disease.

The wand can heal others' injuries far more rapidly, but at a cost. The user can heal any damage, including aggravated, instantly. With a successful Arete roll (difficulty of 6) the character can touch a subject and instantly cure one health level of damage per success. The only limit is that the user suffers one level of bashing damage for every level of bashing or lethal damage he cures, and one level of lethal damage for every level of aggravated damage he cures. The wand cannot heal the user of damage caused by its own use.

The user may also use this item to heal herself instantly, but to do this she must touch another target and steal her Health Levels. The difficulty of this Arete roll is also 6 and, as before, healing bashing or lethal damage delivers bashing damage to the target, while healing aggravated damage delivers lethal damage to

the unfortunate target. The wand cannot heal the target's damage.

Regardless of whether the user heals herself or another, the wand must be applied to the target for three full minutes while the user says a short incantation. As a result, the user must rely either upon her friends or upon immobilized or unconscious captives for healing. This item can speed the healing of any living creature (not members of the undead), but it may only give Health Levels to or drain Health Levels from humans and part-humans like werewolves and Changelings. Mages often use this wand as a Unique Focus for all Life magics.

## WOLF PAW AMULET

### 7-point Wonder (Arete 3, Quintessence 5)

While some Dreamspeakers see werewolves as their natural allies, others know that they are mad and dangerous beasts who prey upon humanity. These mages have few ethical problems in using the innate magics found in a werewolf's body. The wolf paw amulet is one of the most powerful of these items. Wearing or making one, however, earns the willworker the hatred of all werewolves who discover it.

This amulet grants the wearer the unnatural strength and healing powers of a werewolf, but also infects her with a touch of a werewolf's raging battle-fury. Only Dreamspeakers and a few members of the Verbena make this type of amulet, but mages in many Traditions can use one. Dreamspeakers always make wolf paw amulets from a werewolf's dried forepaw wrapped in thin silver wire.

**System:** Drawing on the werewolf's natural vitality, the wearer automatically heals one level of bashing or lethal damage every turn she wears the amulet. In addition, by making a successful roll using the amulet's Arete of 3 at difficulty 6 and spending a point of Quintessence, the wearer can increase her Strength for one dot per success. This increased Strength lasts for the remainder of the scene. Any mage who wears a wolf's paw amulet also gains two dots of Influence among werewolf hunters and any other enemies of these monsters. These abilities, however, come with a heavy price. The wearer of the amulet also partakes of a werewolf's supernatural rage and gains the *Berserker Merit* and the *Short Fuse Flaw*. She also gains the *Witch-Hunted Flaw*, because both werewolves and their Kinfolk will gladly hunt the wearer down and kill her quite messily if they ever discover she possesses such an amulet. Any werewolf who comes within two yards of anyone wearing a wolf's paw amulet will smell it with a successful Perception + Awareness roll, difficulty 8.

## TATTOOED TALISMANS

The Verbena, the Cultists of Ecstasy and the Dreamspeakers all use magical tattoos, but members of the Akashic Brotherhood both use and create the majority of them. Magical tattoos are useful because they cannot be lost or taken away. However, extensive ones are also quite noticeable and their presence can easily identify someone as a potential mage. Many willworkers who use these tattoos frequently use Mind 2, Matter 3 or Forces 2 Effects to conceal them temporarily or at least to make them appear to be nothing more than ordinary spiritual or decorative tattoos.

Few mages tattoo themselves; this is traditional among all tattoo artists, because it is far more difficult to tattoo oneself than it is to tattoo someone else (add +1 to the difficulty of all rolls if the mage tattoos himself). As a result, there is an elaborate system of reciprocity among magical tattoo artists and much talk about the merits and problems in various magical tattoo artists' works. Fads and trends center around artists who transcend the boundaries of Tradition with their work. Currently, Morgan Fire, a Verbena who works as a professional tattoo artist, is regarded as the finest creator of magical tattoos in North America. Her work is in great demand, and she regularly gives tattoos to members of the Akashic Brotherhood, Cultists of Ecstasy, Dreamspeakers and Euthanatos.

Since two mages who trade tattooed Talismans possess an intimate magical link and a point of each other's Willpower, tattoo exchange is a serious bond of trust. In addition to the magic necessary to create any sort of Wonder, a mage must have at least Craft (tattoo) 3 to be able to create an appropriate tattoo to form the basis for the enchantment.

### PATTERN-RIPPING CLAWS

#### 6-point Wonder (Arete 2, Quintessence 10)

This tattoo is common among members of the Akashic Brotherhood. It allows the owner's hand-to-hand blows to do aggravated damage. The details of the tattoo vary with the artist, but in all cases it involves tattoos on the user's hands and possibly his feet. Some tattoos consist of clawed feet of raptors or big cats over the owner's hands, while others are simply a series of stylized marks between the owner's fingers. This tattoo is highly visible unless the owner wears gloves or conceals it with magic.

**System:** By spending one point of Quintessence (which can come from either himself or the tattoo's internal Periapt), the owner may infuse his hands and feet with sufficient Prime energy to allow him to deliver



aggravated damage with all Brawl and Martial Arts attacks for the next full scene. One needs no rolls to activate this affect. Anyone with Prime 1, or who makes a Perception + Awareness roll (difficulty 7), can see that the owner's hands and feet are sheathed with claws or blades of glowing energy.

## SHAPESHIFTING

### 6-point Wonder (Arete 4, Quintessence 10)

This tattoo allows the character to shift into a single other form. The tattoo covers much of the user's body and consists of a large image of the animal the owner can become. The owner may have a tattoo of a stylized raven covering her back and shoulders or a huge snake winding up one of her legs and around her torso. Ordinary clothing normally covers this tattoo, but light or low-coverage clothing, like shorts or tank tops, may reveal it. The mage can only use this Talisman to transform into an animal that is no more than twice and no less than a tenth of her own weight. She could become a small pony or a huge raven, but could not transform into an elephant or a sparrow. This tattoo is extremely popular with both Verbena and Dreamspeakers, who normally use it to take on the physical forms of their totems. Some unusually daring Cultists of Ecstasy also enjoy being able to take on the form of an animal. Members of the Akashic Brotherhood rarely use this tattoo, since most regard the human form as intrinsically perfect.

**System:** The character must make a successful roll using the tattoo's Arete of 4 at a difficulty of 7 (8 with witnesses) and spend one point of Quintessence. A single success on the Arete roll allows the character to assume the form of the animal for a scene, and two or more successes allows the character to remain in this form for a full day. If the character also wishes to transform her clothing and equipment into her animal form, she must roll one additional success. Otherwise, she either wriggles out of her clothing or rips it to shreds when she transforms and will be both nude and without any equipment when she resumes her human form.

## TECHNOCRACY DEVICES

The following items are used by one or more Conventions within the Technocracy; Tradition mages who are lucky enough acquire them use captured versions of many of these, as well. Although many Virtual Adepts and Sons of Ether regard Technocracy Talismans as less advanced than their own work, no one can deny that anything created by the Technocracy is generally safer and more reliable than similar Tradition creations. A few greedy or amoral Technocracy em-

ployees occasionally sell Devices and Artifacts taken from deceased Technocracy operatives to Tradition mages who are able to pay the high prices. Although this trade in Technocracy Devices is comparatively small, the Technocracy has so far been unable to completely stamp it out.

## MICRO TOOL KIT

### 3-point Wonder (Arete 1, Prime Energy Storage 5)

Almost all of the Technocracy's technicians use one of the various models of this tool kit. It usually appears to be a hard-sided sunglasses case, but a multitude of small, highly specialized tools are inside. Through a useful feat of coincidental magic, these kits always contain whatever specific tool the user may require, from specialized lock picks for a particular type of lock to the perfect shade of makeup to match someone's skin tone. This item is fairly common, and dozens are in the hands of Tradition mages who stole them or removed them from the bodies of dead Technocrats. Because these items are so popular, all recent versions contain small locator beacons that are normally inactive (making them very difficult to find) but which can be activated if the tool kit is reported missing. Now that the Rogue Council has resparked the Ascension War among some malcontents, these tool kits are proving to be a useful way to track down rogue willworkers who actively interfere with Technocracy operations.

**System:** Different kits exist for different Abilities. The most common aid Technology, Medicine and Investigation Abilities. However, kits also exist for Computer, Survival and Expression (for disguise) Abilities. No Arete rolls or Quintessence are needed to use this tool kit. Instead, all uses of the appropriate Ability are made at -3 difficulty. These kits also include a small Prime Energy battery that can power any Technocracy-made device and can be recharged at any Technocracy substation. All uses of these items are completely coincidental.

## TRANSPORT PASS CARD

### 6-point Wonder (Arete 4, Prime Energy Storage 10)

The ability to get the appropriate agent onsite with great speed can often be the difference between success and failure in a critical mission. In addition to their fleets of black helicopters, private jets and other specialized vehicles, the New World Order can also call upon a wide range of mundane Resources unavailable to the vast majority of Sleepers. Between having the ability to book a ticket on a plane leaving in 10 minutes, to having the clearance (or, at minimum, the illusion of clearance) to requisition a high-speed military trans-

port plane, Technocratic agents can move across town and across a continent with great speed. The transport pass is one of their most powerful methods of facilitating movement. This item is an electronic ID card the size and shape of a driver's license. It contains a powerful dedicated computer laminated directly into the card and has a radio link to a concealed earpiece through which the agent can receive directions and other instructions from the card.

Using voice commands and a touch-sensitive display screen on the card's back, the user need only tell the item her ultimate destination and the transport pass card will find the fastest possible way to move her from her current location to her destination, and will even make all necessary arrangements. (Tradition mages using stolen cards have found them to be similarly useful.) Using its powerful computer, it will book space for the agent on commercial flights, including otherwise full ones (other passengers may even be bumped to make room). The item is also tied into the GPS network, including the secret GPS transmitters that the NWO and the Syndicate have placed in most commercial vehicles, so the card instantly knows the closest cab or bus that the agent should catch. The card can even change its appearance to imitate any form of ID or badge needed to facilitate the agent's journey.

This card can get the agent to her destination with great speed. However, the journey may be extremely unusual. An agent might be instructed to walk around the corner and catch the cab that is just letting out a passenger there. Next, she gets to the airport, flashes an airport employee ID to get through security, goes to the gate and picks up a first class e-ticket just before a plane leaves. Once the plane lands, she finds a hired driver waiting to whisk her to her destination in the new city. If needed, an agent can use the card to transport up to four additional passengers, but with somewhat more difficulty.

**System:** The agent must first input the data into the card and either accept the proposed route, or attempt to further optimize it. Doing the latter requires the agent to make a Wits + Technology roll with a difficulty of 6 (7 if the agent is attempting to find transport for multiple passengers). Then, the user must roll the card's Arete of 4 with the same difficulty (-1 for each success on the previous roll, if the user attempted to improve the card's results). If the user rolls even a single success, the combined Correspondence and Entropy magics in the card provide the user with an unusually fast method of getting to her destination. To aid in particularly vital efforts, the card also contains a

small Prime-Energy battery that can be used to boost the power of the card's computer.

If the user rolls one success, the card will move her to her destination in about half the normal time, with none of the normal delays and waiting normally associated with travel. The user will quite literally step off of one vehicle and find the next one waiting a short distance away. Each additional success allows the user to further reduce the time by half. With three or more successes, the user will often end up being a passenger on a top-secret supersonic military transport plane or using similarly unusual forms of transport. In addition, all transport provided by this card is unusually comfortable and pleasant — users who fly generally go first class. Finally, the transport methods are provided at no cost to the user, due to the card's ability to hack into all transport systems. The NWO will attempt to deactivate stolen cards, but a Virtual Adept or other mage skilled in both computer use and Entropy magic can keep a card activated by rolling at least one success with a coincidental Correspondence 2, Entropy 3 Effect. All uses of this item are coincidental.

## VOID ENGINEER LIGHT ENVIRONMENT SUIT

### 6-point Wonder (Arete 3, Prime Energy Storage 10)

Light duty environment suits are skintight body stockings made from advanced ionic cloth. This body stocking is fitted with a concealed, belt-mounted life support system. When the suit's gloves and helmet are not worn, this garment closely resembles an unusually shiny suit of long underwear. Most Void Engineers wear one of these suits under their clothing whenever they are on duty, and many Technocracy employees wear these suits whenever they are stationed off the earth or in one of the Technocracy's undersea bases. Since this garment can be easily concealed under any sort of heavyweight clothing — like a business suit, or even under sweatpants and a sweatshirt — some Void Engineers also find these suits useful to wear when they are on Earth and concerned about being attacked. Sons of Ether who build ether- or voidcrafts often attempt to steal or otherwise acquire several of these suits.

**System:** Although they are extremely thin and flexible, these suits provide the wearer with two dice of lethal and bashing soak without any reductions to dice pools. This soak is increased to four dice against any attacks based on heat, cold, electricity or radiation. The suit also allows the wearer to be comfortable in temperatures ranging from -20∞ C to 55∞ C. Targeting the user's head (and hands, if the user is not wearing the suit's gloves) to negate the protection of this armor

increases the difficulty of any attack by +3. In addition, the suit contains a transparent hood concealed in the collar, which can be pulled out to become a transparent, roughly spherical helmet. While wearing the helmet, the user is protected against vacuum, hostile atmospheres, water up to a depth of 100 meters, and is

also immune to extremes of heat or cold. This suit's life support system consumes one point of Prime Energy every two hours of use. However, even when the life support is exhausted, the suit continues to serve as easily concealed armor that keeps the wearer comfortable in extreme weather.

## GRIMOIRES & PRINCIPIAE



*Books are little portable pieces of thought.*

— Susan Sontag

*My library was dukedom large enough.*

— William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*

A Grimoire (or its technomagic counterpart, a Principia) is a book of wisdom that contains pearls of enlightenment, usually in the form of magical or mathematical formulae, sigils, chants, margin notes, detailed illustrations and even haiku. They can guide a careful reader through some of the more complex intricacies of magical theory, rewarding her with a degree of understanding that wouldn't have been possible otherwise — at least not without a great deal of effort and reinventing the wheel.

Grimoires are extremely rare and highly prized items. Like many such legendary Wonders, mages fight over them like cats and dogs. They hoard them and guard their very existence from others, lest they be stolen before all their secrets can be gleaned — or lest such knowledge fall into the “wrong hands.”

All the secrets of a Grimoire are not learned on a single reading. A mage whose Arts benefit from reading through a Grimoire may read it many years later and find that it contains even more wisdom than he'd initially realized. For this reason mages keep their Grimoires. Mages know well that a true classic can always bear re-reading.

A Grimoire may help a mage increase his overall comprehension of magic (raising Arete), or it may grant insight into a particular Sphere. It may do both. The best Grimoires may contain enough wisdom to spark a reader's mind several times on several different topics, but the greatest of those are, obviously, highly coveted and not easy to come by.

The archetypal image of the wizard's enormous spellbook has a certain degree of validity. Many of the classic Grimoires are written (and possibly illuminated) by hand and bound in leather, but mages are a varied lot, and given how personal a thing a Grimoire is, its appearance is likely to be as unique as its creator (and mages, on the whole, tend to be notorious individualists).

A Grimoire/Principia is a doorway into its author's own journey of enlightenment. The most basic of these are simply magical journals containing experiments and musings on the nature of magic, while more sophisticated examples may be priceless works of art containing illumination, illustrations, or even photographs. Given a Grimoire's personal nature, it can only truly inform those who share a similar paradigm (others may appreciate it, but they won't “get it” enough to benefit from the book's more powerful effects). Similar does not necessarily mean identical; while both a Virtual Adept and an Iteration X agent might benefit from a particular Principia, neither of them will be able to make heads or tails of a Grimoire that can be easily understood by both Verbena and Euthanatos mages.

Most Grimoires are written solely for practitioners of a single Tradition. Because they are rooted so firmly in a particular Tradition's paradigm, only mages of that Tradition can understand and use them. There are some, however, that deal less specifically with one Tradition's dogma and more generally with underlying magical principles, and any mage who follows a particular approach to magic may understand those Grimoires. *De Angelis Libris*, a book on angelic magic, would make sense to members of the Celestial Chorus, the Order of Hermes and possibly even by more open-minded Dreamspeakers and Taftani (both of whom make frequent use of Spirit magic). Likewise, a book of necromantic rites would be accessible to Euthanatoi as well as Nephandi.

All Grimoires share one key element: they all use the same form of magic to communicate across barriers of time, space, and possibly even death. That potent magic is called “language.”

### LANGUAGE IS MAGIC

Language is one of the most powerful forms of magic invented by mankind, but since it surrounds us, it remains transparent; consequently, most Sleepers (and even some mages) take its vast power for granted.

Language is a form of telepathy. If I have a model of the world in my head, I can place that model of the world in your head simply by making sounds with my mouth.

Written language is more powerful yet. If I have a model of the world in my mind, I can make marks on a piece of paper that can symbolize that entire state of reality. Furthermore, you don't need to know me to gain access to my model of the world. You might be 5000 miles away from me, or two centuries removed, and yet by tracing with your eyes the symbols I wrote, you internalize my vision of the world, allowing my thoughts into your head.

There's a reason knowledge is considered dangerous.

The old notion of the mage, chanting in powerful old languages from his huge leather-bound spell book — be it in Latin, Greek, Enochian or Sanskrit — comes from an archetypal, but largely unconscious, knowledge of the power of language.

Furthermore, one who lies can be considered to be using dark magic, because he is, through the power of language, creating a fraudulent model of the world in the mind of the person he is lying to. The word “warlock” (commonly defined these days as a male practitioner of dark magic) actually comes from the Old English word for “liar.”

## MEMES

According to technomantic theory, a *meme* is any idea that can spread from mind to mind and prompt people to action. Just as a gene acts as the organizational principle at the cellular level, a meme acts as an organizational principle at the cultural level.

A song is a meme, originating in its composer's head. As it spreads to new minds, it might have the effect of causing people to buy an album containing that song. The whole point of radio (or any medium), therefore, is to disseminate memes.

Not only is language a meme (and a powerful one at that), but it is also a vector by which other memes are spread. Memes that resonate with larger populations are more powerful than memes that only resonate with a select few. Some memes are self-destructive (“Self-sacrifice is the noblest cause”), while others are uncommonly virulent (evangelical Christianity) and destroy other memes they come into contact with.

*Meme theory* asserts that religions, political parties and mystic traditions are all memes; they all compete for cultural resources and strive to replicate themselves. As with genetic selection, the cultural phenomenon with the strongest (most persuasive or appealing) memes wins. The thought engineers of the New World Order caught on to this years ago and have been infecting the minds of millions with memes that further their agenda: “Nature is dirty,” “Convenience is the highest virtue,” “Individuality is dangerous,” “Everything can and should be explained,” “Consumption is fun.”

Magic, like language, is a meme. The Technocracy hopes that its memes of control and obedience (“Be good”; “We’re watching you”; “There is no such thing as magic”) will soon quash the individualistic

memes of the Traditions (“The goddess is alive and magic is afoot”; “Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the law”).

Consequently, the Technocracy *hates* Grimoires because such Wonders can hold and preserve a mystical meme even after the meme's last living believer has been “neutralized.” If, for example, the last Taftani mage were to be killed, the tradition of Taftani magic could still blossom again if a talented and dedicated individual stumbled upon a trove of Taftani Grimoires. Given the right set of circumstances, the core memes of Taftani magical practice could still return and gain a following.

While the Council of Mystic Traditions has commonly placed a high value on Grimoires for their ability to preserve mystic memes, these Wonders have their downside as well. The twisted memes of the Nephandi have also been preserved in books. There have been times, in fact, when Nephandic cults have spent large amounts of time and other resources to create vast libraries of black Grimoires, and more than one innocent mage has unleashed horror upon the world by unwittingly studying a tome containing the inhuman memes of the Filthy Ones.

The problem with memes is that they're insidious. You don't know when you're being exposed to one or how potent it might be. A mage, on the other hand, can use a **Mind Empowerment** Effect to identify and possibly shield himself from memes (that's what Buddhist awareness training is all about, after all), as any Akashic Brother can attest.

As one final example, the concept of memes is itself a meme. As you've read this sidebar, your mind has been infected with that new meme. If you tell a friend, you can infect his mind with the meme meme as well.

## USING GRIMOIRES

A mage makes use of a Grimoire simply by reading it in its entirety. Some Grimoires may require the reader to perform certain magical exercises that illustrate elements of magic, but most do not.

A mage obviously needs to understand the language the Grimoire is written in or it does her no good. A talented Adept who does not read Akkadian can make no more use of a Grimoire written in that language than a Sleeper. Hermetics, obviously, have the advantage when it comes to Grimoires due to their age-old fascination with languages. A significant majority of all Grimoires (including those the Hermetics can't make use of) are in Hermetic libraries for that reason. The number of Grimoires lost with the (presumed) destruction of Horizon Chantry is incalculable (although there are persistent rumors that the librarian, Nicodemus Mulhouse, had in place certain powerful Effects that would whisk the library away to safety in the event of a catastrophe).

A mage cannot speed read through a Grimoire and expect to come away with a higher degree of wisdom. Grimoires are weighty texts, dense with information, that require the mage to alternately read and ponder the contents of the tome. Truly comprehending the lessons of a Grimoire requires one week per level of the Wonder: A 1-point Grimoire can be understood after a single week of reading and contemplation, while a 5-point Grimoire requires a week and a month of attentive study to unlock its secrets.

In return for the time spent studying a Grimoire, the mage may receive a number of advantages, although every additional benefit hinges on a fresh reading of the work.

Reading — and more importantly, understanding — a Grimoire/Principia most frequently allows a character to benefit by following the writer's thought processes as she passes from one level of mystical understanding to the next. A mage who reads and fully comprehends a Grimoire may raise his Arete (by spending experience points) *without having to undergo a Seeking*, or he may gain insights that allow him to learn a particular Sphere with less difficulty (assuming he has the necessary foundation in that Sphere). The lessons of the book are so perfectly phrased and organized that they can open the doors of perception in the reader's mind. (Of course, finding such a book may be part of a mini-Seeking, or one's Avatar may lead one to it.)

Reading a Grimoire also requires a certain amount of skill and/or work (meaning: a willingness to apply one's readings to experience). You can only gain new

understandings from a Grimoire rated higher than your present Arete level. A Grimoire that teaches Arete 2 will do nothing for the Arete of a mage whose Arete is already 2 (although it may have other benefits), but an Arete 3 Grimoire can open his mind to new vistas.

The trick to reading a Grimoire is to put its teachings into practice (i.e., spend experience points). Without this crucial element, the teaching is temporary; it's an altered state, not a permanent trait. In other words, it's possible (and likely) to gain only temporary Arete from a Grimoire. You must spend experience to make it permanent. Until you do, you may only use the extra Arete for a single Effect or once per story, at the Storyteller's discretion.

A Grimoire that assists with Arete may or may not make the Spheres easier to learn, but those that do allow the mage to learn that particular level of that particular Sphere for fewer experience points than usual. The cost is the current Sphere rating x8 (x7 for specialty Spheres) minus the Grimoire's level.

[Current Sphere rating] x8 (x7 for a specialty Sphere) – [Grimoire level].

Example: Allison Singhe, *bani* Euthanatos, studies the Thanatoic Vedas of Asvattha, a 3-point Grimoire. In her first reading, the Grimoire leads her through the complex web of Chakravanti lore and allows her to understand the complexities of the world that lead to Arete 2. At a later stage in her career, however, she re-reads the Thanatoic Vedas and sees a slightly different pattern in the text, and from this she is able to learn her fourth dot of Entropy for 25 experience points instead of the 28 it would have cost otherwise.

To get the benefit of a Grimoire, one must study it actively. It requires the personal, internal, imaginative experience of *reading* — not the passive experience of watching something. There are many media, therefore, that cannot be Grimoires. A convenient rule of thumb is this: If it's a passive experience (movies, television) it might make for a good indoctrination tool, and it might even *prevent* Awakening and hinder advancement (by distracting or numbing the viewer), but it will in no way assist a mage in his quest for enlightenment.

Beyond the fifth rank of a Sphere, only experience can teach a mage. At those rarified degrees of enlightenment, words are too clumsy to convey the nuances of thought and sense behind such an intensely complex awareness of how the world works.

The major drawback to Grimoires is their rarity. A mage may spend decades, if not the better part of a lifetime, seeking a Grimoire that works for her Tradition, *and* that helps with a certain level of Arete *and*

explains the working of certain Spheres. Such is the power and rarity of these Wonders. It is worth noting that even a Grimoire that your mage can't use is worth procuring if the opportunity presents itself. It may work for others in her cabal or, at the very least, be a powerful bargaining chip if the mage ever wants to make a trade with someone in possession of a more useful Grimoire.

## PRIMERS

Primers are special Grimoires that can grant an individual her first dot of Arete, thereby Awakening her. This Awakening is not automatic. There are some Sleepers whose Avatars are too damaged or dormant to be Awakened. The complacency-inducing techniques of the Technocracy make it increasingly harder to Awaken Sleepers, but Primers are potent Wonders and succeed where nothing else will.

The Sleeper must be of above-average intellect and willing (even if only subconsciously) to open his mind to new ways of perceiving the world. If the Sleeper reads the entire Primer and makes an active attempt to understand the contents, he will most likely Awaken. In this case — and this case only — the character need not spend experience points for his first dot of Arete. (Unless you are playing an extended prelude that includes the character's Awakening, this is probably a moot point, since **Mage** characters begin with one free dot of Arete.)

By far the best-known Primer is the legendary *Kitab al-Alacir*. To this day, every prospective Son of Ether is

offered a copy of this remarkable work and watched for signs of Awakening after completing it.

## CREATING GRIMOIRES

Needless to say, creating a Grimoire (or Principia) is not something just any mage can do. It requires a degree of enlightenment; the author can only teach a level of Arete *two less* than his own. This means that an author with Arete 4 cannot write a Grimoire capable of raising its readers' Arete higher than 2; while a treatise written by a mystical adept may be mind-blowing to some, those same ideas will be elementary to others already advanced on the path of Awakening. In addition, the author must have considerable skill in writing (and possibly calligraphy, bookbinding, art, programming and ink-brewing for that matter) and in areas of knowledge associated with his paradigm and/or Spheres. In a sense, the writer is addressing the reader's Avatar — not an easy task for mere mortals.

But even then, it's not just a matter of skill and enlightenment — it also requires magic. Like artifacts, Grimoires must be "sealed" with a magical Effect or their true teachings will elude any reader. They may still provide mundane knowledge, but they cannot enlighten a reader without an extended ritual to cement its making.

The creation of Grimoires differs somewhat from the creation of other Wonders in that a good deal of the mage herself is placed in the tome.

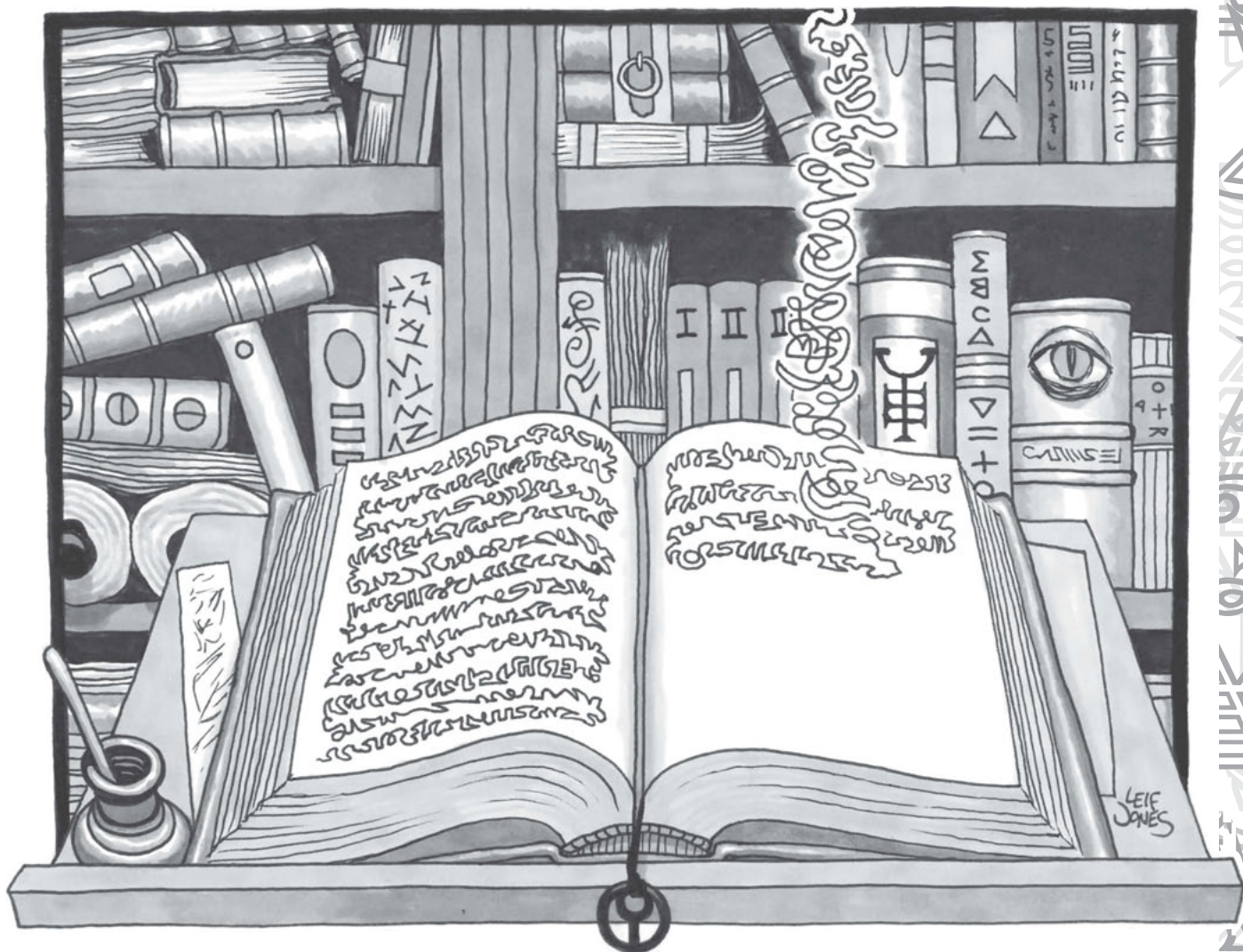
Unless the mage is content to inscribe his knowledge on a scroll, he must possess some knowledge of bookbinding. Once the book is bound, the mage must inscribe the text as part of an extended ritual. The ritual is all consuming. The mage may do nothing else but eat and sleep for one week per point value of the Grimoire. The basic Effect bound into a Grimoire is not particularly complicated, but the specific rote depends on the mage's ability with words. A will-worker with three or fewer dots in Expression will need magic to express himself well enough to convey his meaning with sufficient clarity and so will need to use a conjunctive Effect of Mind 3 and Prime 4. With Expression 4 or higher, he uses magic only to fine tune the reader's inferences about the text, requiring only a Mind 2, Prime 4 Effect.

A mage writing to illuminate the workings of a Sphere need not incorporate Effects of that Sphere into the book (although some do), but he must possess a rating in that Sphere that is one (or more) higher than the one he is explaining (i.e., a mage writing a Grimoire

### WHO USES THESE THINGS?

To one degree or another, most mages have their equivalent of both Grimoires and Primers, although what functions as a Grimoire or a Primer differs radically from Tradition to Tradition. The Grimoires of the Akashic Brothers, for example, are more like scrolls of choreographic direction for *do kata*, while those without a written culture have the oral equivalents of Primers. Primers, despite being more difficult to create, are actually somewhat more common than Grimoires, owing largely to the greater need for them. A number of myths, properly written down by a mindful and suitably skillful mage, act as Primers for those with magical talent.

By far the most common Grimoire is the classic *Kitab al-Alacir*, used by the Sons of Ether, the Hermetics, the Children of Knowledge and, to a lesser extent, the Ahl-i-Batin.



that facilitates the understanding of Mind 3 must have Mind 4 or higher).

The truly challenging part of creating a Grimoire, however, is the act of putting one's self into the work. The mage must invest one *permanent* point of Willpower in the Grimoire at the end of the writing process. This reflects the sense on the mage's part that, in the act of creating the Grimoire, he has transferred a great deal of his knowledge, his understanding and *himself* to the students of his tome. The point of Willpower need only be invested once per work. A mage who makes multiple copies (or translations) of a single work need only invest the Willpower once upon completing the first Grimore, not once per copy.

A Grimoire's point rating is equal to the Arete ranking it teaches plus one dot for every additional Sphere it facilitates. Thus, a Grimoire that teaches Arete 2 and does nothing else is a 2-point Wonder. A

Grimoire that helps with Arete 4 *and* helps the reader to learn two Spheres is a 6-point Wonder.

Very few mages are content to create a basic Grimoire. For one thing, magely egos are substantial, and since creating a Grimoire is such a major undertaking, most mages do everything in their power to maximize the book's beauty, pedagogical ability and, above all, durability. For this reason, Grimoires often include all the bells and whistles a mage can incorporate into the text: self-turning pages, animated illustrations, various degrees of indestructibility, strategic teleportation abilities and similar features. The film *Prospero's Books* by the director Peter Greenaway (based on Shakespeare's *The Tempest*) contains several excellent examples of remarkable Grimoires. Hermetic magi, in particular, are known to go to extreme lengths to outdo one another in the grandness of their Grimoires.

At odds with the mages' egos is the burden of Paradox. A Grimoire that creates three-dimensional representations of the principles it's describing in the air above it and answers questions posed to it in a pleasant speaking voice is a marvelous Wonder, but it is safe only in the confines of a sanctum. A more humble Grimoire that *only* conveys knowledge when a mage reads it may be less remarkable overall, but it won't burst into flames due to Paradox when a Sleeper sees it do something "impossible."

Obviously, any work this time consuming is intended to last through the ages, and any mage creating a Grimoire is going to make it as capable of withstanding the years as possible. In mundane terms, this means Grimoires are made of very sturdy materials — thick leather over oak for the cover, vellum pages and ink of the highest quality were the norm for many years, but modern mages have even sturdier materials to work with. One Son of Ether used Tyvek (an untearable paper) for the pages of his Grimoire and smooth black diamond for the cover (a simple task for a Matter specialist). Technocrats place their Principiae on CD-ROM or use nanotechnology to write them on a grain of diamond.

Grimoires often require mages to possess certain competencies or to follow a certain behavioral regimen in order to trigger the comprehension that the book leads to. At the very least, the mage reading a Grimoire must be fluent in the language in which the Wonder is written. Others may require a minimum score in a Knowledge, like Cosmology or Enigmas. Many Grimoires contain such leaps of logic that a mage without 3, 4 or even 5 dots in Intelligence might not be able to make use of it. Some Grimoires require the observation of certain physical praxes to trigger the book's enlightening abilities. A mage might read the text closely several times, but without performing the somatic elements of the Grimoire, there will be no enlightenment. Akashic Brothers are known to make their Grimoires useful only to other Akashics by requiring the student to move flawlessly through complex sets of Do routines before the pieces of the Grimoire work together to make sense. Grimoires communicate through language, but many things — movement, coding, music and similar phenomena — are all valid forms of language in which a mage might preserve and pass on his enlightenment. At the Storyteller's discretion, the Background cost of a Grimoire might drop by a point if the book has two or more conditions that the mage must meet. For example, a 4-point Grimoire might be

## NON-TEXTUAL GRIMOIRES

Books and other forms of texts are inarguably the most common types of Grimoires, but they are by no mean the only kinds. Pre-literate cultures have their own mages and their own ways of jump-starting Awakening.

Oral Grimoires — usually in the form of long allegorical poems or stories — can be passed on only via someone who has memorized the entire work. This is a big undertaking for both the student and the teacher. The process of transmitting a symbolically complex work is time-consuming, arduous and — since every word and every phrase of a Grimoire has been chosen to help trigger enlightenment — it *must* be memorized verbatim.

The process of learning an oral Grimoire from one who knows it takes one full week per level of the Grimoire, and the student can do nothing else during that time besides eat, sleep and memorize. The time requirement is halved if the teacher uses Mind 3 Effects to convey the Grimoire telepathically.

Crafting a verbal Grimoire is extraordinarily difficult. The degree of focus and memory necessary to create and fine-tune a memorized work of the required length is beyond anything our modern alphabet-riddled culture possesses. A mage creating such a work must have some means of hearing his work over and over again as he's working on it in order to hear the work and make changes where necessary. This might be as simple as a Mind 1 Effect allowing the creator to master his thoughts, a Forces 2 Effect to make the air sing back the words he just chanted or even a particularly astute (and verbal) Familiar.

available for three Background points if it required the student both to dance through a series of steps *and* intone the whole text while doing so.

Creators of Grimoires frequently enhance their durability with magic. Matter Effects strengthen the work and render it immune to water or fire damage, while Entropy Effects ensure that the book has a long and blessed destiny that entails falling into the hands of those who will treat it well and use it as its creator intended.

Some mages, Verbena especially, insist on writing their Grimoires in blood just as their predecessors did,

although any mage intending to do so must have either two dots in Life or two dots in Science to prevent the blood from clotting in the ink well and clogging her pen.

## CREATING PRIMERS

Tomes written to teach Arete 1 — known as *Primers* — can Awaken certain readers. Strangely enough, these are harder to write than those intended to teach Arete 2. Only an author who has an Arete rating of 5 or more may write a Primer.

The creation of Primers require especially rigorous magic, usually making use of highly complex Mind, Prime and Spirit Effects to spark the soul (and Avatar) of its reader into Awakening. Furthermore, the author must literally put something of himself into the book (more than mere Resonance). He must spend *two permanent* Willpower points to make a Primer (rather than the one normally required for Grimoires).

In addition, he must succeed in a number of writing and knowledge skill rolls as he writes the book (before he even begins the ritual to enchant it). He must choose every word, every phrase and every brush stroke carefully to convey his precise meaning. The mage must think back, remember what it was like *not* to know what he knows now and to make the knowledge as palatable as possible to an unAwakened reader. This requires many dice rolls, typically Expression and Crafts, but possibly Technology, Linguistics, Cosmology, Enigmas, Performance or even Subterfuge. The Storyteller determines these based on the ambitiousness of the project, but five assorted writing/knowledge rolls per day of preparation is about right. Very few mages, consequently, can successfully produce a Primer, which accounts for their scarcity throughout history.

## A LIBRARY OF GRIMOIRES

The following examples of Grimoires are listed by name, followed by their point rating, game effects and explanation of their histories. The game effects blurb specifies which rank of Arete the tome allows the character to learn without a Seeking; following that are any Spheres the Grimoire facilitates. Note that the character must re-read a Grimoire very closely to get the secondary or tertiary Sphere benefits.

When a player reads a Grimoire, the Storyteller is encouraged to take the player aside — possibly in a separate game session — and describe, in detail, the contents of the Grimoire and indicate what rhetorical devices the writer uses to convey the book's magical knowledge.

## THE ASKLEPIAN TRACTATE

### 3-point Wonder (Arete 2, Life ●●●)

Those mages who want to specialize in healing magic have been known to go to extreme lengths to obtain a copy of the Asklepan Tractate, a Grimoire of herbal lore and healing magic produced by the great healer (and alleged son of Apollo) Asklepios. Its insights into the patterns of living things are nothing short of awe inspiring.

The tractate's primary drawback is that it is written entirely in ancient Greek. No one has yet successfully translated this popular Grimoire and managed to maintain its magical properties.

Verbena and Hermetics can utilize this Grimoire.

## THE BOOK OF SHADOWS OF MAEVE MCKINNON

### 6-point Wonder (Arete 3, Entropy ●●, Forces ●●●, Life ●●●)

One of the true classics of the Grimoire form, *The Book of Shadows of Maeve McKinnon* is a mystic journal detailing its author's journey from unAwakened girl to revered Verbena Master. Along the way, the tome grants insights into the domestic life of an 18<sup>th</sup> century Irish witch.

The Book of Shadows is enormous: three feet high by two feet wide by five inches thick. This appears to have been necessary in order for Maeve to fit her large, flamboyant script on the page. The pages are vellum and the cover is hand-tooled black leather over brass. The book has a sturdy locking mechanism, and it cannot be opened without the key (without using Rank 4 or higher magical Effects, that is).

At first glance, a reader may be inclined to believe that Maeve was a simple farmwoman who happened to fall in with an interesting crowd. As one reads further, it becomes clear that Maeve McKinnon was a brilliant woman whose intellect and common sense were equaled only by her uncompromising outspokenness. The accounts of her adventures and misadventures in a world where the church was still agitating to burn witches makes for fascinating reading, magical benefits notwithstanding. Furthermore, the way she uses parables to subtly guide the reader to certain magical realizations is the work of a clever and sophisticated woman, not the farm girl she initially comes across as.

In addition to all its other benefits, the reader of the *Book of Shadows* also gains one free dot each in fairy and wraith Lore.

Only Verbena may benefit from this Grimoire.



### THE CLOUD DANCE OF ETERNAL VISION AND JOY 4-point Wonder (Arete 3, Correspondence ●●●)

The Cloud Dance is, at its heart, a *kata*, a scripted pattern of movements a student performs in order to master certain techniques. Carefully written and drawn on rice paper, the Dance is a flowing series of meditative postures (not unlike tai chi, though much, much more complex and exacting). Each of the 101 postures is illustrated with an exquisitely rendered brush painting. Three haiku accompany each painting, clarifying for the student the state of mind that should accompany each posture, as well as other details that the paintings may have left unclear.

Simply understanding the connection between the postures and the associated states of mind is enough to grant the reader the requisite understanding to raise Arete without a Seeking, but to get the secondary effect — understanding of the third rank of the Correspondence Sphere — the mage must perform the Cloud Dance of Eternal Vision and Joy. This is a difficult work even for those who don't have a problem with the

language barrier. It requires Intelligence 4 to fully comprehend and a Dexterity of 4 and a Do rating of 2 to perform correctly. Though reading and comprehending this Wonder may take weeks of study on the mage's part, performing the Cloud Dance of Eternal Vision and Joy properly takes approximately an hour. The mage should perform the Do routine in as serene an environment as possible.

The Akashic Brotherhood and the Wu Lung once had many Grimoires similar to the Cloud Dance of Eternal Vision and Joy, but with the destruction of the Akashic monasteries and the scattering of the mages, many of these were destroyed or lost.

Only members of the Akashic Brotherhood (including Wu Lung) may benefit from this Grimoire.

### THE DITHYRAMB OF THE MAENAD MELANIPPE

#### 4-point Wonder (Arete 3, Life ●●●●)

Melanippe was a Maenad — a frenzied worshipper of the god Dionysus — who lived in the Phrygian

countryside around 800 BCE. As her understanding of the god's mysteries increased, she became one of the vine god's greatest followers. Her understanding of the magic of nature was vast.

The myth is that the Maenads were all insane, but the truth of the matter is that anyone who stares eye-to-eye with a god for a long time tends to have their comfortable models of the world shaken, if not completely shattered. Given that Dionysus is the god of life and ecstasy, it makes sense that Melanippe had some perspectives on life that those less blessed did not share.

The dithyramb is a passionate address that Melanippe delivered on the eve of the *oreobasia* — the holy festival of Dionysus held every two years in the mountains. In an effort to impress the god with her knowledge and piety, she summed up everything he taught her about the world. It is both a prayer and an account of the thought processes that brought her to that great moment.

The insights remain eye-opening 2,800 years later.

A reader may at first have problems with some of Melanippe's leaps of logic, but it is precisely in these leaps of logic that wisdom occurs. Melanippe gives the reader just enough direction to determine where she's going with her thinking, but then lets the reader do the actual work. These "gaps" get wider and wider as the dithyramb goes on until the last one leaves the reader hanging, and the only resolution is to come to the same realizations Melanippe herself came to nearly three millennia ago — resulting in increased Arete.

Some mages have been known to go a little mad or become a bit wild reading this Grimoire, but nobody ever said magic was a safe and respectable pastime.

The original tablets containing the text of the Dithyramb were on the walls of a temple to Dionysos until the latter years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Whether the tablets were removed to keep them safe or whether they were destroyed is unknown.

Several translations are known to exist, but only one, by the German philologist-mage Heinrich Barsch, captures the essence of Melanippe's thoughts well enough to convey her wisdom on mystical matters. A mage must bind the text of the Dithyramb into manuscript form very carefully and observe all the appropriate rituals before it can convey Melanippe's meaning well enough to trigger any sort of magical enlightenment.

Ecstatics, Verbena, Dreamspeakers and (tellingly) Marauders can all benefit from studying this work.

## LIBER TENEBRIS DISTALIS

### 4-point Wonder (Arete 3, Spirit •••)

This foul tome is a book of intermediate demonology, including the foul rituals the Nephandi use to summon, bargain with and reward the more twisted entities of the spirit world, including some of unarguable power, including one or two Maeljin Incarna.

Included in the text are the True Names of many moderately powerful Banes and assorted demonic Umbrood.

As is typical with Nephandic Grimoires, using this book to learn the third rank of Spirit lowers the experience cost, but puts the mage at risk for the rest of his magical career.

Nephandi and Hermetics alike can benefit from this work, although any mage of the Order of Hermes who makes use of this Grimoire had best be very, very careful. A willworker learning the third rank of the Spirit Sphere from this Nephandic Grimoire is putting his very soul at risk; should he ever subsequently botch a roll while working Spirit magic (including conjunctional Effects incorporating Spirit), his Avatar will immediately invert and he becomes a widderslainte. Key to the rest of any chronicle in which such a thing happens is how long it takes for the rest of the mage's cabal to realize that something has gone terribly awry....

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40.4292.18.23.C

### 4-point Wonder (Arete 2, Entropy •, Forces •••)

A mage needs a minimum rating of 4 in either Technology or Computers to understand this Principia, as it's written entirely in a programming language called obfuscated c. A casual observer looking at the screen or at a printout of `procedure.rand.enlight/40.4292.18.19.c` sees what looks like line noise or gibberish, although it's actually surpassingly elegant computer code. Even those with the necessary understanding of obfuscated c will find it incredibly difficult at first, but as their minds adjust, they find themselves thinking in this odd language, a key element in the Enlightenment granted by this Principia.

This digital tome is a subroutine of an entire array of Principiae used by Iteration X that explains all of reality in computer terminology. Remarkably, `procedure.rand.enlight/40.4292.18.23.c` breaks down the principles of Enlightened Science into simple, but

increasingly complex algorithms, and as the mage begins to master these increasingly challenging concepts, they spark his wetware into Enlightenment.

With the exception of Primers, Iteration X's Principiae are usually written in obfuscated c, perl or, infrequently, machine language.

Members of Iteration X and the Virtual Adepts can use this Principia.

## THE SPIRIT CHANT OF UPOTAK — PRIMER

### 2-point Wonder (Arete 1, Spirit •)

Not all Grimoires are physical artifacts. There are some whose important wisdom is transmitted via some method other than reading a book. The Spirit Chant of Upotak is both a Primer and an oral "Grimoire" taught to young Dreamspeakers of the Coast Salish Tribe after their elders have determined that they are worthy of becoming shamans, and it has never been written down. The Spirit Chant of Upotak is illustrative of the approach to Grimoires taken by cultures that pass everything on through oral tradition and storytelling. The power and magic of the Spirit Chant rely on the exact wording of the chant, the hypnotic meter and its psychologically resonant rhyme scheme. The chant takes about four hours to recite all the way through, and it can both Awaken an individual's Avatar and, at a later date, make the first rank of the Spirit Sphere easier to understand. Simply possessing a deep understanding of the Spirit Chant is enough to allow the former, but flawless memorization is required if it is to help with the latter.

The chant is the story of the great ancestor Upotak, whose father was a spirit and whose mother was a mortal woman. The chant speaks of a great feud that developed between spirits and the world of men. Through Upotak's intercession, a war between the two was averted, balance prevailed and both sides prospered. In addition to its inherent value to Dreamspeakers, the Spirit Chant of Upotak also contains some enlightening references to the Changing Breeds (which, at the Storyteller's discretion, may or may not grant a point of Lore in that subject).

## THE URANIAN PLEASURE MANUAL OF DR. KARL HEINRICH ULRICHS

### 7-point Wonder (Arete 4, Forces ••••, Life ••, Matter •••••)

Written by the Son of Ether Archmage Karl Heinrich Ulrichs in 1879, the *Uranian Pleasure Manual* is a comprehensive book of metaphorical

sexuality profusely illustrated with a series of 360 lovingly rendered and highly detailed erotic lithographs. It is among the most amazing (and coveted) of Grimoires ever produced. While its artistic (and magical) merit is beyond question, the *Pleasure Manual* would have utterly outraged the Victorians of Ulrichs' time had they ever seen it; not only does it have 120 pictures of men and women having sex, it has 120 pictures of women having sex with women and 120 pictures of men having sex with men. The very possession of such a tome would have resulted in morals charges for its owner.

The *Pleasure Manual* is essentially an extended metaphor that explains magic in terms of sexuality. It claims that a deep understanding of human sexuality can lead to the mastery of magic by understanding and manipulating the six great etheric forces; while some still consider Ulrichs a pervert and a crackpot, there are those who have read the *Pleasure Manual* who swear he was only illustrating the relationship between the six different subatomic particles that modern science calls quarks. The principles that Dr. Ulrichs discusses propound a model of the universe that synthesizes astrology, Etheric theory, Taoism and what we would now call quantum mechanics.

The *Pleasure Manual* is extremely rare and nearly impossible to find, as not only is it prized by those seeking magical insight and by Ecstatics who appreciate the beautiful eroticism of the work, but also by unAwakened collectors of Victorian pornography. Most copies of the *Pleasure Manual* are in German, although the learned Dr. Ulrichs also had the foresight to produce three in English and one each in French, Latin, Greek and Sanskrit. The Museum of Sex in New York City is rumored to have one of the English editions in its collection, but the whereabouts of the others are unknown.

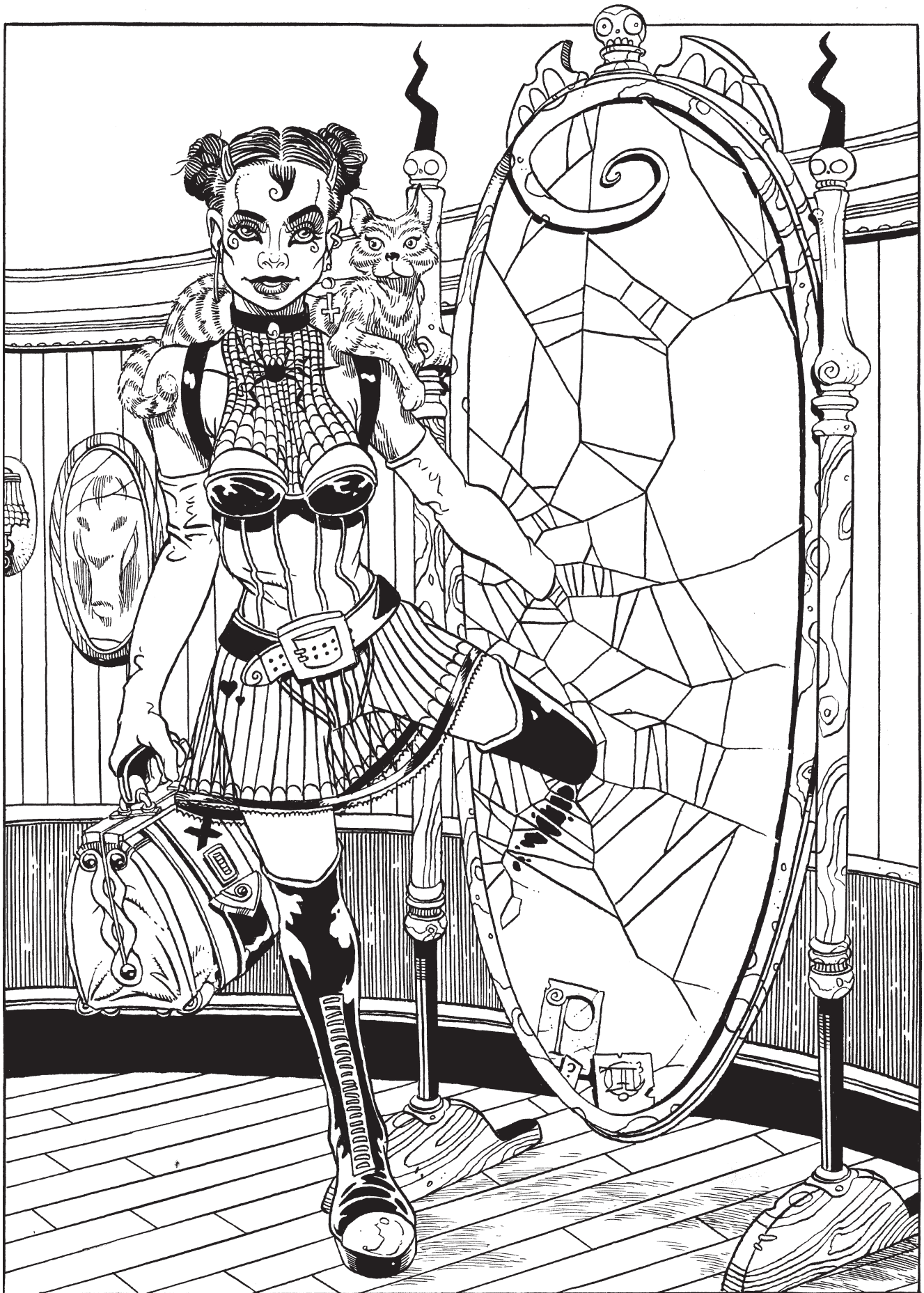
The explicit nature of the *Pleasure Manual* has led to its discovery and near destruction at various times. Several different groups — including the Nazis in 1938, the Baptist Spiritual Soldiers in 1951 and the Cincinnati Decency League in 1991 — have taken it upon themselves to be the self-appointed moral guardians of community decency and burn the *Pleasure Manual*. Ulrichs, crafty fellow that he was, took care to make sure that the *Pleasure Manual* was as indestructible as he, a Master of Matter and Forces, could make it.

Gaining sufficient understanding of the Grimoire to raise Arete requires only a close reading of the book. Gaining the understanding of the Spheres, however,

requires the mage to work his way through every act in the book, requiring enthusiastic (and high-stamina) partners of both sexes. The mage must also find two people of the same sex (opposite his own) to perform

portions of the manual and answer the detailed questions he puts to them while they are *in flagrante delicto*.

Sons of Ether, Hollow Ones and Cultists of Ecstasy may use this Grimoire.



# COMPANIONS ON THE PATH: FAMILIARS

## A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A CAT



Clouds roll across the rising sun, turning the day gray before it even begins. A breeze blows in through the window; it's cold, but it hints that it might get warmer later. Maybe it'll get rid of the awful fog clinging to the ground, the stuff making my fur damp. But that'd be too easy now, wouldn't it?

Stretching, I flex my claws into the antique couch, making neat little popping sounds as I pull them out. Penny is never going to forgive me for what I'm doing to her couch, all those tiny holes. She'll get over it. Jumping down, I walk into her bedroom. It's morning and Sleeping Beauty is still dead to the world. Time to change that.

"Whatever is a poor little cat to do for food?" I say, sarcastically loud and with a haughty accent. "Oh, woe is me, for my mistress do'est appear dead!" I jump up on the bed. She groans a little bit, but shows no movement yet. I walk up her body and stick my nose in her face. And what a sight it is! Last night's makeup is showing signs of intense wear, with her darker skin showing under the pale cover. Her lipstick is mostly gone, and her eye shadow has run, making her look somewhat like a raccoon. It's too bad she doesn't have nice

black fur. I always look good — just another sign of my superiority, I suppose.

"Get off me cat..." she croaks, rolling over and tossing me to the side. I duck out of the way to avoid getting crushed in the tumble of covers and body.

"Rise and shine, princess," I say. "It's that time and you have need to feed me. If you don't, I may just fade away to skin and bones."

She grumbles into her pillow and eventually sits up a little. She looks over at me like I'm something she scraped off the bottom of her shoe. Her expression slowly changes — I've seen this ploy before — and she reaches forward and starts to pet me, slowly, teasingly.

"But Mr. Mistoffelees, however will I defend my valiant familiar if I do not get enough rest?" I lean into it; it's hard to resist, but my growling belly wins out over the affection.

"Your valiant familiar won't be worth much if he withers away to nothing. Now get up." I leap off the bed and away from her hand. No need to give into temptation, and avoiding that was hard enough. Sometimes the body of a cat does have disadvantages.

She finally drags herself out of bed, still dressed in an old and slightly threadbare shift. She wanders mostly by instinct to the kitchen. Running by her feet I race there myself, pushing her a little to the side; she stubs her toe.

"Damn cat!" she growls, hopping up and down on one leg. I just laugh.

I run ahead to the kitchen and hit the "on" switch on the coffee pot. I'm cold but not completely uncaring, and I know the sooner she wakes up the sooner I'll get fed. I sit down on the counter and begin the meticulous cleaning ritual: lick paw, run paw down fur, lick paw, run paw down fur. You would think this would be gross and disgusting, but my body is covered in whiskers; each time I stroke one I get a little jolt of pleasure.

She finally creeps into the kitchen and pulls out a coffee mug. It's completely out of place, modern and harsh in the Victorian surroundings of the apartment. She walks over, puts it down next to me and leans onto the counter, looking like something that crawled out of the grave. I stop my cleaning ritual.

"Judging by your appearance," I say, "you either had a good time last night or you had a very bad one."

"A little of both."

"Well, are you going to tell me about it, or do you expect me to divine it out of thin air?"

She recounts to me a tale about going out to a club and having another run-in with the Men in Black. She fills the story with the latest gossip about the area Goths and their ever-changing (not) fashion sense. It's too early for her to be polite and sociable, so she's mostly blunt and to the point.

"But the strangest thing happened. We were all ready to lead the pair of shirts out back and take them down, and some guy I've never seen before came out of nowhere and attacked them. I didn't know the guy and he didn't even fit in. He looked like a hippie greenpeace freak. Attacked the shirts right there in the club."

"Was he of your persuasion?"

"If you're implying whether I found him attractive..."

"No, I wanted to know if he was using magic. I'm not at the mercy of some biological clock, unlike some others."

I have found that a slight sarcastic barb at times will guide someone in the right direction. It's like my own personal whip. She needs to remember the bigger picture; sometimes she forgets that there's a reason the universe bestowed her with these grand powers.

"It wasn't anything I'd seen before. Manifesting a glowing sword out of mid-air would usually be a bad idea, but he didn't seem to suffer any ill effects. Maybe we should investigate it?"

I look at the coffee pot as it finishes, sputtering small puffs of steam up and out. Penny reaches for it and fills her cup. She sips it slowly; we don't talk, and she needs to wake up.

"So what's the plan for today?" she asks, blinking a little. She seems to be pulling herself together, though... slowly.

"Well, we have our little deal to fulfill today," I say. "I get my food, and I take care of your problems. Standard deal."

"So it's that time of month again?" She smirks at me. I hate it when she does that. Caught in my own game.

"Why yes it is. You should know. Is your cycle running off kilter?"

She blushes furiously, and looks at her cup of coffee again. Score one for the cat. Seriously, however, I am worried. She usually is right as rainwater when it comes to her cycle, and she's now about a month off it. I hope it doesn't mean what I think it means.

"You know that's not funny, cat. I missed it last month too. That's definitely not a good thing for a woman of my stature."

I just shrug. If it comes, it comes, but I don't know how she is going to handle it. We'll just have to see what happens. I leap off the counter and walk toward the inner sanctum of the apartment. Not that it's much; it's a collection of old junk with supposed mystical meaning, but it makes her feel more comfortable, so I'm not going to complain. She turns to rummage around in the fridge, looking for my sushi and cream, I suspect. I walk into the room and take my place, sitting down in front of the pillow in the middle of the floor.

She walks in and looks around slowly. She's checking to make sure no one has tried to break through the barriers she has put up. Nodding, she closes the door behind her and walks over and sits on the pillow, a small rectangular oriental plate in one hand and an antique bowl in the other. She sets them on the floor and I leap up into her lap and wait.

She feeds me sushi by hand; I delicately take bites as she strokes my back. I can feel the energy radiating off her, going into me with each bite. It's strange: I can almost remember a time when I struggled for this kind of food, back before, and I don't think I was a cat either. Not that it matters now; I have a ready source of food and Penny honestly cares about me.

It's over way too soon as I lap up the last of the cream. Penny keeps petting me and even through the feeling of being energized is over, I can still feel her love for me. Beyond that, I can also feel some worry behind it — not about me, but about something else. I lounge a little bit, going limp in her lap, while she pets me and seems to stare off into nothing.

"Let me take a little burden off you now," I say.

I look at her and I can almost see a sheen covering her; it's oily and seems to shift and flux around her. It's thicker then I remember from the last time we did this little ritual. Last night was much worse than she'd told, or she's been doing something that I haven't seen. Slowly, I start to lick the sheen off her, like I'm cleaning myself. The oily substance doesn't really have a taste, more like a texture, and

it doesn't seem to hold the same texture all the time. I lick off as much as I can take, but there is only so much. It makes me feel kind of queasy to my stomach, like if I keep going I'm going to be very sick. I finally stop and work on swallowing it all down.

"That was more than I expected, dear."

There is a loud knock at the apartment door — more pounding than knock.

"Police! Open Up!"

Penny looks down at me and then back at the door.

"Wait here." She stands, walks out the sanctum and quickly comes back.

"Cops backed up by Men in Black. Apparently, my activities last night didn't go unnoticed. Any ideas?"

I stretch and decide it's time we tried something risky. "Feel like a trip to the Umbra?"

"I don't know," Penny says, looking worried. "Last time we tried that, I was laid up for weeks, and it really hurt."

"Oh, quit whining. Remember that rote Xoca taught you last month? Pick me up, open up a gateway, and let's get out of here." I sound all full of bravado and all, but I'm a bit worried, too. Not for me, but for her. Still, I don't see other options.

She grabs her doctor's bag and stuffs a few objects from her personal sanctum into it (no reason to let them get ahold of everything). She then turns around and faces the full-length mirror in the corner, chants something under her breath and waves her arms in front of it.

Suddenly there isn't a mirror there anymore, but a series of spider webs crisscrossing what looks like a window into an endless, ravaging storm. Penny picks me up in the crook of her arm, and tries that rote — the one we've both been worried about and haven't dared use until now. With a wince, she steps through into the mirror.

I feel myself grow bigger than Penny. I step around and through her; it's hard to explain. I'm touching every part of her and I can feel the Storm battering ineffectually at me, but it's not hurting her — that's what's important. The spider webs finally peel away and it's over.

I jump from Penny's arms and stretch out on the Umbral ground. It's good to get my claws back into ephemera. Penny just looks amazed. She looks around, and finally looks down at me.

"Are you ok?" she says.

"I'm fine; it was you I was worried about."

She picks me up and starts walking, petting me and holding me close. We did it. She's safe and I'm safe, and we made it out.

All a day of the life of a cat, I suppose.

## FREE PASSAGE

The **Infinite Tapestry** sourcebook introduced new methods for avoiding or mitigating the Avatar Storm. One of these was a rote involving familiars; that rote is reproduced here for convenience.

### SHIELD OF THE SOUL [PRITIE •••, SPIRIT ••]

In the wake of the Reckoning, mages who would interact with the Umbra have, of necessity, learned methods of circumventing the Avatar Storm, no matter how strange or dangerous. Many attempts have met with varying degrees of success, but the best of these ideas thus far was to "hide" the Avatar inside the spiritual presence of a familiar. **Shield of the Soul** draws upon the essence of the mage-familiar bond to armor an Awakened human being against the ravages of the Avatar Winds. As the familiar is a native of the Umbral realms, it is always allowed through the Gauntlet without harm, thus protecting the mage fully from the spiritual damage normally sustained in otherworldly travel.

Etherites are known to engage in bizarre and extensive "psychic bonding exercises" with their familiars in preparation for the use of this rote, while Hermetic mages strike small pacts, exchanging a service for a service, and Virtual Adepts sometimes "code" their own Patterns into those of a familiar before engaging in cross-Gauntlet travel.

**System:** A single success is sufficient to conceal the mage's Avatar more or less "inside" his familiar's aura and thereby spare it from damage in the Avatar Storm — or most of it, at any rate. The mage need not roll Arete when determining damage from an Umbral crossing, but must still roll any Paradox she has (since the taint of Paradox is often carried as much within the mind and body as the spirit).

The mage may also seek to bring others over through the auspices of her familiar. Doing so, however, can be risky. One extra success per person to cross over is required, but this rote does not fully shield hangers-on against the Avatar Storm. Instead, the number of successes scored on the **Stepping Sideways** rote (or whatever magic is used to cross the Gauntlet) — which *must* in this case be cast by the same mage who cast **Shield of the Soul** — determines how many pass through in safety. Passengers beyond that number (determined randomly, excepting the caster of this rote) are affected normally by the Avatar Winds.

# SOMEONE TO WATCH YOUR BACK



There comes a time in a mage's life when he realizes that he is alone. Not alone in the common sense of the word, but alone in the pursuit of whom and what he is. This realization follows his Awakening — he knows he's different. Most mages deal with this in many different ways. Some seek the company of others, finding solace in the embrace of their Tradition or cabal. Others find solace in their

power; having ability nigh unto God only encourages them to seek more power. There are some who try to forget, and some who go mad. And a few, a very select few, go another route: They find a companion of sorts, a familiar.

In this chapter you will find expanded rules for familiars. There are some changes to the basic rules given in previous books, but they're all optional.

## THE CLAIMING, FEEDING AND CARE OF FAMILIARS

Familiars have unique relationships to their mages. Unlike an ally or a contact, a familiar is almost constantly with its mage. It follows him into the fray of battle and can be a source of knowledge for him. As such, it's important to know how to gain or create a familiar. Once you have one, however, it is dependent on you for survival; the chances of a familiar finding a wellspring of Quintessence on its own — let alone holding it — are quite low. Beyond food needs, a familiar may be dependent on you for protection or support; it's an individual, but an individual depending on you to keep it alive.

Familiars start off as spirits roaming the Umbra. They may have a sympathetic tie to a place or a person, or they may just be wanderers; regardless, they have neither the power, nor in some cases, the ability to manifest for long periods of time in our world.

### CALLING OUT

The mage needs to first identify and find the sort of spirit that he wants to attach himself to. This can be anything from a tiger to a wolf, or even a quartz crystal — everything has a spirit, and each spirit has different abilities, knowledges and powers. Most mages will attract lower-powered spirits; serving as a familiar gives a spirit more experience and power in the long run. This is an individual choice for each mage to make and a question that each spirit has to answer for itself.

The next step is often the hardest: once a mage chooses a type of spirit, he must also find one who is cooperative. This usually involves going to where its real world counterpart comes from, wherever it calls home. A tiger spirit, for example, would most likely be found in the spiritual reflection of the jungles of India or Thailand.

Instead of traveling to meet the spirit, the mage can call it to him. Starting what a mage hopes will be a lasting relationship by demanding a very long journey from the spirit can cause some bad blood. To put it in game terms, the number of successes rolled on a Spirit 2 **Call Spirit** Effect determines how cooperative the spirit is when it arrives. The difficulty may be raised if the spirit is not native to the area into which it is called. The mage may get lucky and the spirit may show up willing to serve, but if things go badly, the spirit might give the mage a lesson in rude demands.

Once the spirit and the mage are face-to-face, a bargaining process usually begins. A tiger spirit is not necessarily going to want to give up its already established lifestyle, particularly if it is well off. The mage has to offer it things that it doesn't already have. Quintessence is a good lure. In the wild the spirit has to collect such magical dew where it can; getting it from a mage on a regular basis is quite a boon. Ease of feeding is just one bargaining chip, however; there is also protection or magical boons.

It's in the mage's best interest to do some research before attempting to attract a spirit, finding out what sort of things a spirit is likely to want. This can be anything — sure, all tigers like meat, but what if your tiger spirit has a taste for snake? Offering this spirit snake for dinner is more likely to get it to do what you want.

There is also the promise that serving as a familiar can add experience and power to any spirit who takes up the duty. This has the possibility of raising its ranking in the spirit world once its stint as a familiar is over. Keep in mind that things are still completely flexible at this point — including the body the spirit will occupy.

### MAKING A BODY

Once a spirit is selected and bargained with, the next step is the acquisition of a body. There are a number of options that a mage can choose at this stage. One of the rules of existence is that form follows function. A spirit is most likely going to want to stay in a physical form that is as similar to its spiritual form as possible. The tiger spirit, once again, is most likely going to want to have a tiger body. There are a few examples where this does not hold true: A wind or water spirit may wish to occupy something other than its natural form, if only for the experience. In the long run, a spirit grows to reflect its body. A cat spirit stuck in a dog's body is going to start acting more like a dog.

The most common method is for the spirit to Materialize at its maximum potential, and then for the mage to make that form permanent with a Prime 3 Effect. If the spirit does not have the Materialize Charm, the mage could **Breach the Gauntlet** and allow the spirit to enter the physical world through a shallowing.

## BROODMATES

Spirits are rarely independent; most of them serve in some form of Umbral hierarchy. They are usually associated with some greater spirit's brood, either that of a nature totem or an astral Incarna.

When dealing with spirits of a familiar's former brood, the Storyteller may lower the mage's social roll difficulties or improve the spirit's attitudes, depending on how well the mage and familiar parley this connection. If the mage does not get along well with his familiar, this probably won't work well, but a happy familiar's attitude may rub off on others of his kind. This works best, of course, when the familiar is present, but if the mage has built enough of a reputation with his familiar, word may travel and allow him these bonuses even without his familiar's company, especially if he needs to approach his familiar's former broodmates seeking help for his familiar, who might be wounded, captured or otherwise unable to make the journey itself.

The mage can instead create or use an already existing body. Creation is mostly the use of Matter or Life to bring a new form into existence. This is done via one of two methods. The first is the actual creation of a body. This requires Life 5 (or Matter 4 for nonliving constructs). The mage could form the body out of an existing one, duplicating a mouse's body, for instance. This step might require some knowledge of biology (or Technology, for constructs).

Once he has created the body, the mage needs to cement the spirit in the body. If the spirit has the Possession Charm, it can possess the shell. The mage then cements the possession with a Prime 3 Effect. If the spirit cannot possess the body, the mage needs to use Spirit 4 to bind it to the body, with Prime 3 to make the binding permanent.

Another option is to steal an occupied body. This process is often viewed in a negative light; possession is the thievery of someone's life. When a soon-to-be-familiar spirit takes over another creature's body, he subdues the spirit that was in its place. This effectively means death for the spirit, since once a familiar has a body, it most likely won't give it up.

The familiar spirit practices such body thievery by using the Possession Charm. It ousts or subdues the current occupant of the body and moves itself in. Then, the mage uses Prime 3 to cement the soul into the body permanently.

Another method is dirtier and harder to accomplish. The mage and the familiar spirit fight the spirit inhabiting the desired body and spiritually kill it, thus vacating its spirit from the body. This requires the mage and familiar to engage the target spirit in the Umbra. In addition, Life magic might be required to keep the vacated body alive long enough for the familiar to inhabit it.

A corpse — a dead body emptied of its spirit — can also offer a home for a familiar. The familiar possesses the corpse, which acts much like a zombie. The mage might want to repair any debilitating wounds on the body or make improvements using the Matter Sphere. Once he accomplishes this, the mage binds the spirit to the body using Prime 3, making it a single organism for all intents and purposes. The familiar can animate the body as if it was alive, but it is not: repairing injuries requires Matter magic, not Life.

## BONDING

The final step in the creation process is the use of Prime 3 and Spirit 4 to create a bond between the familiar and the mage. Two successes are needed per point level of the familiar, and one Quintessence must be spent per level (i.e., three points for a 3-point Familiar).

Bonding is a process in which a familiar and mage get to know each other in the most intimate ways possible, mind to mind. They have to concentrate to build this bridge of souls between the two, the mage sharing part of himself with the

## THE BOND

The bond between a mage and his familiar is a very special thing, akin to the bond between a mage and his Avatar. Such bonds have been known to last beyond the grave and into new lives with mages and familiars meeting again in their new incarnations. In addition, the bond strengthens over time. The longer a mage and familiar are together, the stronger the bond becomes. Some mages who have had the same familiar all their many lifetimes know its thoughts as well as they know their own. On the flip side, a mage tends to reflect his familiar as well. A mage who has a snake for a familiar may make serpentine motions, whereas one with a rabbit might have small tufts of fur on the tips of his ears.

The bond provides some special abilities:

**Arcane Connection:** Others can magically exploit the familiar bond: anything the familiar touches is also touched by the mage.

**Empathy:** The mage and familiar have an empathic connection: each can sense the other's emotions.

**Paradox Absorption:** A mage can shunt points of Paradox onto his familiar (see *Familiars and Paradox*, p. 83). Familiars don't generally appreciate this, but will consent if the need is great.

A mage cannot have more than one familiar at a time. This mystical bond can be broken only with a Spirit 5 Effect (two successes are needed per Background point spent on the familiar), but the mage can choose to break it at any time without an Effect. However, once broken, all points spent on the familiar are lost.



familiar, and vice versa. The connection of souls is not an easy process for either party. They might discover things about each other that they don't like, don't want to share and might wish to forget, but this only makes the bond closer.

### THE GIFT OF A FAMILIAR

Many young mages don't have the power or Sphere knowledge to call and bind a familiar. In certain chantries, a mage's mentor might gift him with a familiar, performing all the magical work necessary; the gifted mage need only be present for the binding (although many spirits won't consent without watching or meeting their prospective mage first).

Hence, it is quite possible to begin play with a mage incapable of calling a familiar and yet who has one anyway: a gift from his beloved mentor — or perhaps a means the old Master uses to keep an eye on his young pupil?

### FEEDING YOUR FAMILIAR

Familiars need to eat, but not like normal creatures do. While it is a being in a physical body, it was not born to this state. The body can digest food, but this only nourishes the physical body; the familiar can gain no spiritual sustenance from it. Familiars are *thaumivores* — they need to devour Quintessence to survive. A mage not only has to keep his familiar's physical body whole with food, he needs to feed it magical energy.

Most mages perform both feedings at the same time, imbuing the familiar's food with Quintessence so that it gets all its nutrients at once. The actual act of transferring Quintessence to the familiar is done through the Prime energy link established in the Bonding; this allows the mage to transfer his Quintessence to his familiar.

Most familiars need an amount of Quintessence per week equal to the Background points spent on them. A 3-point Familiar requires three Quintessence points per week. A familiar that doesn't receive its required Quintessence suffers one level of bashing damage each day that it isn't fed. This damage cannot be healed until the required Quintessence is provided.

The required amount can be brought down if special conditions are declared during the Bonding. For instance, the spirit could demand a rare form of Tass instead, such as cat hearts stewed in the finest cream. The difficulty in preparing this can lower the amount of Quintessence the familiar requires, as if it were a flaw, but instead of lowering the Background point cost, it reduces the weekly Quintessence outlay. Details are left to the Storyteller, but the minimum Quintessence per week should never drop below one point. Only extremely rare or dangerous-to-gather Tass should warrant large reductions.

## CARE AND GROOMING

When caring for a familiar, a mage needs to attend to its physical needs. This can be as simple as washing it every now and then, but additional grooming is often required. A hairy dog needs to be brushed on a regular basis; dead animal dander can matt, making its fur less effective at warding off cold temperatures, causing the dog to get sick. The mage also needs a good vet and the ability to pay for his services, should the familiar ever get injured or sick.

Certain animals are even harder to take care of. Snakes need fresh food — meaning *live* — to feed on. If the food is dead, it doesn't digest as well and can make the snake ill. A mage will also need to find a vet that specializes in herpetology — not easy to find, especially in a rural setting.

## THE DEATH OF A FAMILIAR

When a familiar dies it often comes as a great shock to a mage. This is a being who was tied heart and soul to him. Beyond the obvious emotional shock, there are also serious mental and physical ramifications. The mage who loses a familiar has lost a piece of his soul.

The moment the familiar dies, the mage suffers the following afflictions:

- The mage loses a number of Quintessence points equal to the familiar's Background points.
- The mage must make a Willpower roll (difficulty 5) or become stunned for a number of turns equal to the familiar's Background points.
- If the mage intentionally caused his familiar's demise, he loses one dot of Destiny, which shows up as Fate mark scars on his soul.
- At the Storyteller's option, the mage may use the Background points he spent on his familiar to create a new familiar — unless he intentionally killed his own familiar, in which case the points are gone. Taking a new familiar after the death of the old one is not an idea to be taken on lightly, for the mage may never fully recover from the grief.

## FAMILIARS AND PARADOX

Familiars are creatures of spirit, and as such are naturally static magic entities. They are, however, given permanent material form through dynamic, Enlightened magic. Most familiars do not themselves generate Paradox (they don't cast Enlightened magic), but certain familiars don't really belong in this world and may be relics of a previous, more mythic age. Such *bygones* do attract Paradox when witnessed, but instead of taking the points themselves, their mage suffers them — the familiar Bond is not always a bonus.

Any familiar whose appearance or behavior falls outside of the natural order of things will generate Paradox if witnesses see it (one point per point invested in the Familiar

Background). While a chimpanzee can get away with smoking a cigar (like the chimp who played Cheetah in the old *Tarzan* movies did when not on camera), a dog or cat can't. Any animal that actually talks (besides a mynah bird or parrot) will do more than raise eyebrows — it'll deliver Paradox to its mage.

Of course, mages can get their familiars to absorb Paradox, to hold it themselves. They cannot do this on the same turn they're hit with Paradox generated by someone witnessing an outlandish familiar; they must take an action on a following turn to shunt the Paradox to the familiar.

Familiars can hold up to five points of Paradox per Background point spent on them. If they take more than they can hold, the entire amount is unleashed in a Backlash — not on the familiar, but on its mage. For this reason, it's not a good idea to use a familiar as a Paradox battery — it's only delaying and exacerbating the inevitable.

Those familiars with the Paradox Nullification Charm (see p. 86) can shunt stored Paradox into the Umbra.

### WHO PLAYS THE FAMILIAR?

When a familiar is part of a character's background, the question of who is going to play it arises. Unlike other Background Traits on a character sheet, it can't be easily forgotten or ignored. Contacts and Allies aren't always in the picture, Resources and Wonders are just objects, and Arcane and Avatar are integral parts of a character. A familiar, however, is a being who hangs around the mage most of the time.

The burden of playing a familiar often ends up falling to the Storyteller. This doesn't have to be the case. There's no reason a player can't play both his mage and his familiar, giving voice and deed to both of them. This gives the player more control over the familiar's actions (the mage and familiar *are* empathically bonded, after all). Sometimes, however, the unique form of banter between a familiar and its mage is best handled by letting the Storyteller play the familiar. This way, the familiar doesn't always blindly follow orders and can act as a tool for uncovering new plot points or clues the players might otherwise miss. The choice is up to the Storyteller and player, and it's by no means exclusive: a mix of both approaches is often the best method.

A tip to remember for anybody who roleplays a familiar (whether Storyteller or player) is that it has a personality and motives of its own, and these may differ from the mage's. It adds color to the roleplaying experience — not to mention occasional comic relief — if the familiar sometimes disagrees with its mage.

# FAMILIAR CHARACTER CREATION



Below are some advanced character creation rules for familiars. That's right, *character* creation rules. Familiars are not the main characters but they do play recurring roles, and hence deserve more detail than has been given before. These rules are optional; if they don't fit the needs of a game, don't use them. You may find that they provide too much detail, or give too many powers to what should rightly be a secondary character. But all

this can be made up for with creative roleplaying. It's the job of the Storyteller to use the familiar as more than just a crutch for the player — it's a whole stew of plot points waiting to happen.

## CONCEPTUALIZING THE FAMILIAR

Since familiars are secondary characters, consider these questions before allowing one into a storytelling game session. Familiars should support the roleplaying environment, not unbalance the forces at play.

Players should ask the following questions and Storytellers should be satisfied with the answers before allowing the player to purchase a familiar:

- Why do you have a familiar? Is it to add flavor to your character or simply to get a nifty rules bonus? A familiar can be as critical to your character's makeup as you want it to be, but it's not just for your benefit but for your Storyteller's as well. Although you may be playing the familiar most of the time, the Storyteller will step in now and again, and he needs to know the creature's motivations and goals; explaining your goals for having the familiar helps keep viewpoints from conflicting.
- Who is your familiar? What sort of personality does your familiar have? Is it your best friend in the world, or an opportunist along for the ride? What does it want, besides aiding you with your goals?
- What is your familiar? Form determines many things about your familiar. Besides setting some limits on the familiar's abilities, it also reflects on how others judge your character. Other mages will judge you by the sort of creature you keep

company with. If your character has an imp for a familiar, some folks are going to be somewhat wary of him. On the other hand, if you have a horse as a familiar, how do you keep in contact with it, especially on stories that may take you into a city?

- Where does your familiar come from? The familiar's history can help determine its attitude. What was its life like as a spirit? What sort of brood did it serve?
- When and how did the familiar come into your mage's life? This is as important as why and where. Did the familiar just show up one day, waiting for you to bind it? Or did you quest across five continents seeking its spirit?

## TRAITS: ESSENCE AND CHARMS

Familiars have the same Traits as other embodied, sentient creatures: Attributes, Abilities, Willpower and Health Levels. In addition, they have Essence (spiritual energy) and Charms (spiritual powers).

Essence is the amount of spiritual power a familiar has; it is often a reflection of how powerful it was as a spirit. Familiars do not store Quintessence — they eat it. It fuels their basic life functions: breathing, nutrition and energy. Some of this magical food, however, is converted to Essence, used by the familiar to power some of its Charms. (A mage can tap his familiar's Essence points to gain Quintessence points, on a one for one basis. He does not need the Prime Sphere to do this. Obviously, draining a familiar's Essence leaves it with fewer points to spend on its own powers.)

"Charm" is the term used to describe a spirit's various powers. Since Familiars are manifest spirits (of a sort), their powers can also be considered spirit Charms. Using them does not attract Paradox.

Essence can be regained one of two ways:

- If a familiar rests for eight full hours, it gets back one Essence point.
- A Familiar can convert excess points of Quintessence it gains through feeding into Essence points on a one-for-one point basis. Only excess Quintessence, beyond what the familiar normally needs to sustain itself (see *Feeding your Familiar*, p. 82), can be converted into Essence.

## FAMILIAR CHARMS



Familiars can learn any Charm from the general list, but the types list Charms are restricted to familiars of those types. The point costs are for freebie points, not Background points.

Note: If a Charm has no listed Essence cost, it is considered to be always active (i.e., claws and teeth are always there, even if unused).

## GENERAL CHARMS

### AGGRAVATED DAMAGE (5 PTS)

By spending one Essence point per attack roll, the familiar can make its weapon ultra sharp, delivering aggravated wounds. Only one weapon (including natural weaponry, like claws) at a time can be so enchanted by this Charm.

## FAMILIAR CREATION PROCESS

First, record the total Background points spent on the familiar. The more points, the more powerful the familiar.

### Step One: Familiar Concept

Choose Concept, Nature and Type.

### Step Two: Select Attributes

Prioritize the three categories: (5/3/1). Your familiar begins the process with one dot in each Attribute except Appearance (which is zero, unless points are allocated).

Rate Physical Traits: Strength, Dexterity, Stamina

Rate Social Traits: Charisma, Manipulation, Appearance

Rate Mental Traits: Perception, Intelligence, Wits

### Step Three: Select Abilities

Prioritize the three categories: (7/5/3)

Choose Talents, Skills, Knowledge

### Step Four: Finishing Touches

Record Willpower (3) and Essence (1).

Spend freebie points (Familiar rating x10).

## SAMPLE CONCEPTS

A short descriptor that sums up the familiar's character. You can use the samples given on p. 87 of *Mage* revised, or create your own. One thing also to consider is the spirit's brood before it became a familiar (see the *Broodmates* sidebar, p. 81).

## NATURE

Choose from the list on pp. 87-88 of *Mage* revised.

## TYPE

- **Animal:** Creatures native to the material world: dogs, cats, spiders, tigers, bears, birds, etc.

- **Bygone:** Creatures of legend and the fantastic. These beings no longer exist (or perhaps never existed) in our reality: dragons, imps, fairies, aliens, jackalopes, etc. The very sighting of a bygone by the unenlightened will inflict Paradox on its mage (vulgar-with-witnesses). This

is somewhat made up for in that all bygones have the Quintessence Grazing Charm for no cost.

- **Construct:** Creatures that receive life or animation from a mage's imagination (magical) or ingenuity (technological): homoculi, PDAs or laptops, automatons, etc. Constructs cannot naturally heal damage; they must be repaired. However, they are immune to poison and disease and automatically gain the Soak Lethal Charm at no cost (and can buy the Soak Aggravated Charm at 2 pts). If the construct is obviously well beyond modern technological capabilities, it will garner its mage Paradox if Sleepers sight it (vulgar-with-witnesses).

- **Elemental:** Creatures composed of one of the classical elements: sylphs (air), gnomes (earth), undines (water) or salamanders (fire). The very sighting of an elemental by the unenlightened will inflict Paradox on its mage (vulgar-with-witnesses). That all elementals have the Quintessence Grazing Charm for no cost somewhat makes up for this.

- **Undead:** Animated corpses: zombies and skeletons. The very sighting of an undead familiar by the unenlightened will inflict Paradox on its mage (vulgar-with-witnesses). That all undead familiars have the Soak Lethal and Resilience Charms for no cost somewhat makes up for this. They can buy the Soak Aggravated Charm at 2 pts, and additional Resilience levels at 3 pts each. They can also reduce their beginning one-dot Charisma rating to zero and add the dot to any other Attribute.

## FREEBIE POINTS

Traits	Cost
Attribute	5 per dot
Ability	2 per dot
Willpower	2 per dot
Essence	1 per dot
Familiar Charms	As listed; a familiar can only learn Charms from the general list or from its type list.

## ARMOR (3, 4 OR 5 PTS)

The familiar gains extra soak dice, as follows:

Cost	Armor
3	+1 die against bashing damage
4	+1 die against lethal damage
5	+1 die against aggravated damage.

This Charm can be bought multiple times, with each additional purchase adding more armor dice.

## BAD LUCK CURSE (3 PTS)

By spending one point of Essence, the familiar can cause a single target to suffer bad luck. Roll the familiar's Willpower; each success converts one of the target's successes in a given task into a "1," increasing his chance of botching.

## CLAWS/TEETH (2 PTS)

The familiar has a set of claws or teeth (choose one) that is capable of inflicting Strength +1 lethal damage upon a

successful Dexterity + Brawl attack roll. This Charm can be bought twice to get both teeth and claws.

### COUNTERMAGIC (5 PTS)

The familiar has one die of countermagic. If its mage is physically touching it, he gains this benefit as well. This Charm can be bought multiple times to provide more dice.

### FLIGHT (2 PTS)

The familiar can fly, either through the use of wings or by levitation. Distance traveled is up to 3 + Dexterity in yards per turn.

### HEALING (5 PTS)

With this power a familiar can heal another creature. For one point of Essence it can heal one bashing or lethal level, or for two points it can heal one aggravated level.

### HIDE (1 PT)

When you can't run and you can't fight, sometimes the best move is to sit still and hide. With some natural cover a familiar can hide from whomever searches for it. The familiar has to have some amount of cover, and needs to remain relatively silent and unmoving. The difficulties for search rolls to spot or find the familiar are raised by three.

### ILLUMINATE (1 PT)

The familiar can either give off an ambient glow or light its eyes like flashlights. The light is enough to read by and lets the familiar act like a lamp for others in a small area.

### INVISIBILITY (5 PTS)

The familiar can make itself invisible to normal sight. Sounds and touch impressions (footprints), however, still remain. If the familiar spends one Essence point, it remains invisible for a scene, but if it interacts physically or socially with another being besides its mage, it becomes visible. If two Essence points are spent, the invisibility lasts for one scene and the familiar need not worry about bumping into other beings and losing this Charm's power.

### LARGE (2 PTS)

The familiar is larger than a human, perhaps the size of a bear or a horse. The familiar receives one extra Bruised Health Level.

### LUCK (4 PTS)

By spending one Essence point, the familiar allows its mage a single re-roll on any dice roll. This may result in better or worse results; the mage must accept the new roll over the old. This Charm can only be used once per task.

### PARADOX NULLIFICATION (5 PTS)

The familiar can nullify one point of Paradox per game session. The familiar must take on the Paradox itself and

then send it off to the Umbra; this takes one full turn per point. This Charm can be bought multiple times for extra Paradox point nullification per session.

### QUINTESSENCE GRAZING (7 PTS)

The familiar still has the Quintessence grazing ability it had as a spirit. It can collect Quintessence for sustenance on its own (cutting down on the amount of weekly Quintessence its mage must provide). If the familiar is left at a Node it can draw one Quintessence point per day from that Node. Otherwise, if it spends a week scrounging the area, it can gather one Quintessence point per week.

### READ & WRITE (1 PT)

The familiar knows how to read and write its mage's primary language. If it wants to read more, it needs to learn dots of Linguistics. If it doesn't have opposable thumbs, it must use its mouth to hold a writing instrument, and its handwriting is sloppy. If it has no fingers, it cannot type.

### RESILIENCE (3 PTS)

This familiar is tough. It gains one additional Bruised Health Level. This Charm can be taken multiple times, but a familiar cannot gain more than double its original Health Levels.

### SOAK LETHAL/AGGRAVATED (3 OR 5 PTS)

For three freebie points the familiar can soak lethal damage with its Stamina. For five points it can soak lethal and aggravated damage.

### SPEECH (1 PTS)

The familiar can speak verbally. Unlike most familiars, who can only communicate empathically with their mage, this familiar has learned the ability to speak with its own voice. It must learn Linguistics to speak any language other than its mage's native tongue or spirit speech.

### SPEED (2 PTS)

For each point of Essence spent a familiar can double its speed. This power only lasts for one scene, at the end of which the strain weighs on the familiar. It must rest for one hour per Essence point it spent to double its speed.

### SPIRIT GOSSIP (3 PTS)

The familiar can seek through the Umbra or query other spirits for specific information and lore. He can roll Charisma or Manipulation + an appropriate Ability (Intimidate to scare up the information, Etiquette to politely request it, etc.). The difficulty varies with the complexity of the question. It takes at least one turn to gather the information, but might take up to an hour for obscure lore. The more successes gained, the better the information.

### TELEKINESIS (3 PTS)

The familiar has the ability to levitate objects with its mind. It must concentrate while doing so, and can take no

another action. This costs one Essence point per 30 pounds of weight lifted.

### TELEPATHY (3 PTS)

The familiar can communicate telepathically with anyone in sensory range, regardless of language, although it cannot perform telepathic attacks or distractions.

### VENOM (1, 3 OR 5 PTS)

The familiar can administer poison through a touch, bite, claw or stinger. It must first make a successful attack roll with the weapon before it can administer the poison (a reflexive action once the attack succeeds). Only one poison dose can be administered per hour, unless one Essence point is spent per extra dose.

For one freebie point the poison causes two points of unsoakable bashing damage to any target that fails a Stamina roll (difficulty 7). This wound cannot be healed for one day unless the victim gets medical care or magic that removes the poison.

For three freebie points the poison causes three points of unsoakable bashing damage to any target that fails a Stamina roll (difficulty 8). This wound cannot be healed for three days unless the victim gets medical care or magic that removes the poison.

For five freebie points the poison causes three points of unsoakable bashing damage *per turn* to any target that fails a Stamina roll (difficulty 7); the Stamina can be rolled each turn until it succeeds, preventing further damage, or the victim dies, whichever comes first. This wound cannot be healed for three days unless the victim gets medical care or magic that removes the poison.

## ANIMAL CHARITIS

### DARKSIGHT (2 PTS)

The familiar can “see” in total darkness. This can either be actual vision, heightened smell, a sonar-like sense, or even a mystical ESP. The familiar suffers no penalties for acting in complete darkness.

### ENTRANCEMENT (3 PTS)

The familiar can stare a person or creature in the eye and completely captivate it, holding it in a hypnotic gaze. The target can and will still react if attacked or deliberately distracted, but if left alone he will continue to keep eye contact with the familiar. This requires the familiar to spend one point of Essence and maintain constant eye contact with the enraptured target, who can resist with a Willpower roll (difficulty equal to the familiar’s Willpower).

### FEAR (4 PTS)

The familiar radiates an aura of palpable fear to creatures around it. It might bring back memories of childhood and being chased by the neighborhood dog, or it might remind a creature of what it’s like to be chased by a predator. Whatever the case,



this Charm leaves the affected creature unable to act for one turn and scared for the next 10 turns (he suffers a +1 difficulty penalty to all actions during this time). It costs one Essence per creature targeted. Targets resist by rolling Willpower, with a difficulty equal to the familiar's Willpower.

### NIGHT VISION (1 PT)

The familiar suffers no penalty when in low-light conditions, although complete darkness will blind it normally.

### SHARP SENSE (1 PT)

The familiar has one particular sense sharpened well beyond human capability, such as a dog's sense of smell and hearing. This allows it to make rolls impossible for humans (such as tracking by smell).

### TRACKING (1 PT)

The familiar can track any being, provided it first has a sample of the target's Resonance. Successfully reproducing a mage's Resonance requires Prime 2 and Mind 2, but it's best if the familiar can "sniff" at something the target has actually touched or altered magically. When tracking, roll Perception + Alertness, difficulty 6 (this can be adjusted higher or lower, depending on conditions and the age of the scent).

## BYGONE CHARITIS

In addition to the exclusive list below, bygones can also learn any animal Charm.

### FIREBREATH (5 PTS)

By spending one Essence point the familiar can spit a gout of flame from its mouth. This is actual fire, not an illusion. The flame can shoot a distance of 10 feet from the familiar, in a cone three feet wide at its farthest reach. The familiar rolls Dexterity + Melee to hit its target, and inflicts two levels of aggravated damage. Flammable objects the flame touches might ignite. Firebreath can also be used to heat objects, akin to a Bunsen burner.

### ILLUSIONS (7 PTS)

The familiar can create an illusory object that others might mistake as real. Onlookers roll Intelligence + Enigmas to realize that the object is not real. The object is insubstantial and is revealed as false once touched. This costs a varying degree of Essence, depending on the size and complexity of the illusion. A large rock costs only one point, while a giant prancing dragon might cost three points.

### INSUBSTANTIAL (7 PTS)

The familiar can become incorporeal, and may pass through walls or other obstacles and cannot be physically affected in any way (but neither may it physically effect anything while insubstantial). This costs one Essence point per scene.

### SWALLOW (4 PTS)

Somehow the familiar is able to swallow an incredible amount of stuff and not be the worse for wear. It does not matter what the stuff is made of — organic, inorganic, toxic — none of it harms the familiar. The familiar can swallow items equal to twice its body weight per day, but each item must be able to fit through its mouth. Once swallowed, the object is shunted off into the Umbra somewhere.

## CONSTRUCT CHARITIS

### CHILL OBJECT (1 PT)

The familiar can cool an object to freezing temperature. It must concentrate on the object it is chilling. Each point of Essence spent drops the temperature 20 degrees Fahrenheit. An object can only be cooled 20 degrees per turn via this method.

### CONTROL ELECTRICAL SYSTEMS (5 PTS)

The familiar can manipulate electrical systems. It might use this to shut down the security in a building, fry the circuitry, or electrocute someone. The familiar rolls its Wits + Technology against a difficulty determined by the Storyteller. Each object that the familiar tries to manipulate requires the expenditure of one Essence point.

### CYBERPRESENCE (3 PTS)

This familiar retains some of its presence in the Umbra — very specifically, it can manifest in the Digital Web. Unlike most familiars, it can accompany its mage when he jacks in, although it always manifests in its physical shape in the Umbra: a laptop computer is still a laptop computer. It can use all of its abilities while in the Digital Web.

### ENCRYPTION SOFTWARE (2 PTS)

When physically connected to a computer or a piece of technology the familiar can act like a watchdog over that piece of technology to ward off attempts to hack into it. This is a matter of defense and cannot be used to make it easier for his mage to jack into another's system. For each point of Essence spent the familiar gets two dots of Computer Ability to use in defense of his mage's system (this cannot more than double the familiar's ranking), and also raises by one the difficulty of anyone attempting to break in.

### HEAT OBJECT (2 PTS)

The familiar can heat an object. It must concentrate on the object it is heating. Each point of Essence spent raises the temperature 20 degrees Fahrenheit. An object can only be heated 20 degrees per turn via this method.

### JACK IN (2 PTS)

The familiar can get online anywhere there is a cell phone signal strong enough to carry on a phone conversation. This power won't work in places far from civilization or in areas where the signal may be disrupted, such as gullies or valleys.

## SHOCK (5 PTS)

This familiar can send out an electric shock to a target. The shock can reach roughly 10 feet from the familiar, but only in a straight line. Roll the familiar's Dexterity + Melee to hit. Each electric shock causes two levels of aggravated damage and costs one Essence point.

## ELEMENTAL CHARITIS

### CREATE ELEMENT (3 PTS)

The familiar can create a quantity of its basic element: fire, air, water or earth. For each point of Essence spent, an amount equal to five square feet is created from nothing. The substance is natural and endures only so long as conditions allow: fire without fuel to burn disappears within two turns, water without a container trickles away, and air without a windbreak will disperse.

### ELEMENTAL IMMUNITY (3 PTS)

The familiar is immune from any damage caused by its element. Salamanders with this Charm take no damage from fire; sylphs take no damage from falling through air; undines can breathe in water; gnomes suffer no wounds from weapons of the earth (metal or stone). A familiar can buy this Charm only once.

### ENGULF (4 PTS)

Acts just like the Bygone Charm, Swallow, above.

### INSUBSTANTIAL (7 PTS)

As the Bygone Charm, above.

### SHAPESHIFT (7 PTS)

By spending one Essence point the familiar can assume a different shape of equal size. For two points it can shapeshift to something larger (from a cat to a human). For three points, it can shift into something much larger (a cat into a rhinoceros). The new shape lasts for one scene. Elementals cannot assume forms antithetical to their element: a salamander cannot turn into a pool of water, and a sylph cannot become a rock.

## UNDEAD CHARITIS

### ANCIENT KNOWLEDGE (3 PTS)

The familiar can call upon ancient and forgotten lore by speaking with the spirits of the dead. This acts like the Spirit Gossip Charm, above, except that information unknown to anyone living can still be gained.

### FEAR

As the Animal Charm, above.

### INSUBSTANTIAL (7 PTS)

As the Bygone Charm, above.

### INVIGORATE (5 PTS)

The familiar can spend Essence to make itself temporarily stronger, faster, smarter or more attractive. For every point of Essence spent, one dot can be added to an Attribute for the rest of the scene.

### WITHER (4 PTS)

The familiar can suck the life out of someone by touching him. For every point of Essence spent it can deal one point of unsoakable bashing damage to an individual. It must first succeed in a Dexterity + Brawl attack.

## FLAWS

Familiars can take flaws that award them extra freebie points.

### IMMOBILE (5 PTS)

The familiar cannot move on its own and needs its mage (or someone else) to carry it about. For example, a laptop or PDA familiar cannot naturally move, since it has no legs or other means of locomotion.

### TINY (2 PTS)

The familiar is quite small and can crawl into spaces larger beings cannot. Anything smaller than a normal housecat fits into this category. The familiar has the following Health Levels: Bruised -1, Injured -1, Mauled -2, Crippled -5, Incapacitated.

## SAMPLE FAMILIARS



Below is a list of sample familiars and their base point costs. Freebie points have already been spent. Spending extra Background points provides 10 more freebies per extra point spent.

The Storyteller has the right to refuse the use of any of these familiars if they don't fit the tone of his game.

## AUTOMATON (2 PTS)

The classic, clunky robot, but the pride and joy of its Etherite creator.

**Type:** Construct

**Nature:** Penitent

**Attributes:** Strength 3, Dexterity 1, Stamina 4, Charisma 1, Manipulation 2, Appearance 0, Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 1

**Abilities:** Alertness 1, Athletics 1, Brawl 1, Intimidation 2, Drive 1, Technology 2, Academics 2, Computer 1, Science 4  
**Willpower:** 3

**Essence:** 1

**Charms:** Armor (+2 B/+2 L; 14 pts), Large (2 pts), Read & Write (1 pt), Soak Lethal and Aggravated (2 pts), Speech (1 pt)

**Health Levels:** Bruised (-0), Bruised (-0), Hurt (-1), Injured (-1), Wounded (-2), Mauled (-2), Crippled (-5), Incapacitated.

## CAT (1 PT)

Comes in many colors: classic black, pure white, calico, etc. Just don't cross its path....

**Type:** Animal

**Nature:** Autocrat

**Attributes:** Strength 1, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3, Charisma 1, Manipulation 2, Appearance 0, Perception 2, Intelligence 3, Wits 2

**Abilities:** Alertness 2, Athletics 1, Awareness 1, Brawl 1, Dodge 1, Subterfuge 1, Stealth 4, Survival 1, Enigmas 1, Occult 2

**Willpower:** 3

## TRADITIONS AND FAMILIARS

Different Traditions prefer different familiars.

**Akashic Brotherhood:** Familiars are uncommon among the Akashic monks, who usually prefer to rely on their own powers, gained in solitude and contemplation. Nonetheless, Akashics from rural or folk cultures in the East might adopt a tiger, turtle, crane, or dog. Some have been known to have phoenix familiars — a rare bygone.

**Celestial Chorus:** It is very uncommon for a Chorister to have a familiar, for most prefer the company of their own kind. Nonetheless, certain holy mages have been known to choose animals (rarely bygones and never constructs or undead) that display spiritual virtues, such as doves (beauty), dogs (loyalty) or even lions (for their bravery and courage).

**Cult of Ecstasy:** Again, familiars are a rarity among the Cultists, but every now and then one surprises everybody by showing up with a faerie bygone or a Will-O'-Wisp (see p. 93).

**Dreamspeakers:** No doubt, the Dreamspeakers rely on the most familiars of any Tradition. Most of their familiars are nature spirits of various animals or even plants. They tend to choose their familiars from broods important to them, and work to maintain good relationships with those broods through their familiars.

**Euthanatos:** Rare is the Euthanatos who adopts a familiar, but some have been seen in the company of wolves or predatory cats. Some even use the undead as their companions, dancing in midnight rituals with skeletons or zombies.

**Hollow Ones:** The more Goth Hollowers prefer the classic Romantic symbols: black cats and ravens. The more individualistic Hollowers usually don't use familiars, but those that do use any creature that tweaks their fancy.

**Order of Hermes:** The classic Hermetic familiar is the homunculus construct (see p. 91), an aid in the

sanctum or in the field, but other well-known familiars are elementals, such as sylphs (often named Ariel...).

**Sons of Ether:** The Etherites loves to tinker. Building a construct is something most Etherites intend to get around to... someday. Those that don't put this task off usually build automatons and robots unheard of outside of science-fiction stories — or attempt to spark life and motion in lifeless husks.

**Verbena:** The witches, like the Dreamspeakers, use many familiars. Beside the clichéd black cats, bats, ravens and toads, they also use elementals, faeries and even small dragons (rare, these days).

**Virtual Adepts:** The Adepts often bring their computers or other peripherals to life as constructs. Life can get lonely outside of the Digital Web, and since these guys aren't always good at interfacing with wetware, they look for silicon friends.

Besides the Traditions, there are three more factions to consider...

**Technocracy:** Familiars are very rare among the Conventions, but constructs aren't completely unknown, especially among Iteration X and the Progenitors.

**Nephandi:** Most Nephandi don't work and play well with others, and this prevents them from adopting many familiars. Familiars aren't unknown among this Tradition, but they're usually familiars bonded to the mage from before his fall. A very rare few Nephandi bond Bane familiars into bodies, usually by having a spirit possess a victim first while the mage makes the possession permanent.

**Marauders:** These mages are rare anyway, and those of them who manage to maintain a bond of any sort with a familiar are rarer still. Marauder familiars are practically always bygones from beyond Horizon. Even animal familiars tend to warp and become mythical creatures if their mages go Marauding.



**Essence:** 3

**Charms:** Bad Luck Curse (3 pts), Claws (2 pts), Hide (1 pt), Night Vision (1 pt), Speech (1 pt)

**DOG (1 PT)**

A loyal friend and protector.

**Type:** Animal

**Nature:** Gallant

**Attributes:** Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3, Charisma 2, Manipulation 1, Appearance 0, Perception 2, Intelligence 2, Wits 2

**Abilities:** Alertness 2, Athletics 3, Awareness 1, Brawl 2, Dodge 1, Stealth 2, Survival 3, Investigation 3

**Willpower:** 3

**Essence:** 2

**Charms:** Fear (4 pts), Sharp Sense (smell, hearing; 1 pt), Speech (1 pt), Teeth (2 pts), Tracking (1 pt)

**HOMUNCULUS (2 PTS)**

The perfect extra pair of hands in the alchemist's lab, this dwarfish creature can even heat or cool down substances.

**Type:** Construct

**Nature:** Curmudgeon

**Attributes:** Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3, Charisma 1, Manipulation 2, Appearance 0, Perception 2, Intelligence 3, Wits 2

**Abilities:** Alertness 1, Awareness 1, Dodge 1, Crafts 3, Firearms 2, Investigation 3, Medicine 2, Occult 2

**Willpower:** 3

**Essence:** 3

**Charms:** Chill Object (1 pt), Countermagic (1 die; 5 pts), Heat Object (2 pts), Luck (4 pts), Paradox Nullification (1 point; 5 pts), Read & Write (1 pt), Soak Lethal (0 pts)

**HORSE (1 PT)**

A rare companion in the modern world, but trusty and steadfast.

**Type:** Animal

**Nature:** Traditionalist

**Attributes:** Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 4, Charisma 2, Manipulation 1, Appearance 0, Perception 2, Intelligence 2, Wits 2

**Abilities:** Alertness 1, Athletics 5, Brawl 1, Performance 1, Survival 4, Cosmology 2, Investigation 1

**Willpower:** 3

**Essence:** 2

**Charms:** Large (2 pts), Speed (2 pts)

**Health Levels:** Bruised (-0), Bruised (-0), Hurt (-1), Injured (-1), Wounded (-2), Mauled (-2), Crippled (-5), Incapacitated.

## ITIP (1 PT)

While many think it a questionable choice for companion, this little devilish creature is actually a perfect spy.

**Type:** Bygone

**Nature:** Deviant

**Attributes:** Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2, Charisma 1, Manipulation 2, Appearance 0, Perception 2, Intelligence 2, Wits 2

**Abilities:** Alertness 1, Athletics 1, Awareness 1, Brawl 1, Dodge 1, Subterfuge 4, Stealth 5, Occult 3

**Willpower:** 3

**Essence:** 3

**Charms:** Flight (1 pt), Hide (1 pt), Invisibility (5 pts), Quintessence Grazing (0 pts), Speech (1 pt)

**Flaws:** Tiny (2 pts)

**Health Levels:** Bruised (-0), Injured (-1), Mauled (-2), Crippled (-5), Incapacitated.

## PERSONAL DIGITAL ASSISTANT (PDA) (1 PT)

This looks like any ordinary handheld computer; nobody could mistake it for magic — until they actually use it and realize just how advanced it is.

**Type:** Construct

**Nature:** Pedagogue

**Attributes:** Strength 1, Dexterity 1, Stamina 2, Charisma 1, Manipulation 4, Appearance 0, Perception 1, Intelligence 5, Wits 2

**Abilities:** Streetwise 3, Technology 5, Academics 2, Computer 5, Science 1

**Willpower:** 3

**Essence:** 4

**Charms:** Control Electrical Systems (5 pts), Cyberpresence (3 pts), Jack In (2 pts), Read & Write (1 pt), Soak Lethal (0 pts), Speech (1 pt)

**Flaws:** Immobile (5 pts), Tiny (2 pts)

**Health Levels:** Bruised (-0), Injured (-1), Mauled (-2), Crippled (-5), Incapacitated.

## RAVEN (1 PT)

A good conversationalist.

**Type:** Bygone

**Nature:** Trickster

**Attributes:** Strength 1, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3, Charisma 1, Manipulation 2, Appearance 0, Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 2

**Abilities:** Alertness 2, Athletics 1, Awareness 1, Dodge 1, Subterfuge 1, Stealth 4, Survival 1, Enigmas 1, Investigation 2

**Willpower:** 3

**Essence:** 1

**Charms:** Flight (1 pt), Quintessence Grazing (0 pts), Speech (1 pt), Spirit Gossip (3 pts)

## SPIDER (1 PT)

The familiar you can fit in your pocket.

**Type:** Animal

**Nature:** Perfectionist

**Attributes:** Strength 1, Dexterity 4, Stamina 2, Charisma 1, Manipulation 2, Appearance 0, Perception 2, Intelligence 2, Wits 2

**Abilities:** Alertness 1, Awareness 2, Brawl 2, Dodge 2, Stealth 5, Medicine 1, Occult 2

**Willpower:** 3

**Essence:** 3

**Charms:** Hide (1 pt), Teeth (2 pts), Venom (5 pts)

**Flaws:** Tiny (2 pts)

**Health Levels:** Bruised (-0), Injured (-1), Mauled (-2), Crippled (-5), Incapacitated.

## SYLPH (2 PTS)

A beautiful, if somewhat flighty and ethereal, companion.

**Type:** Elemental

**Nature:** Celebrant

**Attributes:** Strength 1, Dexterity 2, Stamina 1, Charisma 3, Manipulation 1, Appearance 3, Perception 2, Intelligence 1, Wits 3

**Abilities:** Alertness 2, Awareness 1, Dodge 4, Stealth 3, Enigmas 3, Occult 2

**Willpower:** 4

**Essence:** 4

**Charms:** Create Element (Air; 3 pts), Entrancement (3 pts), Flight (1 pt), Insubstantial (7 pts), Quintessence Grazing (0 pts), Speech (1 pt)

## TAINTED FAMILIARS

When a mage falls to darkness and infernalism and pledges himself to the Nephandi, his familiar usually cannot help but fall with him, becoming a tainted spirit. A few legendary stories have been told of how a mage was saved from a fall or brought back from evil due to the diligent efforts of his familiar, but few familiars are strong enough to fight their own mage long enough to reverse his course (and then, usually only with the help of his cabalmates).

Worse, some Nephandi concentrate not on corrupting a mage directly, but corrupting his familiar first. This requires some time alone with the creature, usually far from the senses of its mage (rare, but not unknown). Often, multiple such encounters are required, wherein the Nephandus uses magic, torture and twisted logic to seduce the spirit into serving its corrupt cause, which then acts to bring down its mage also. This often requires Mind magic to remove any conscious memory of the coercion, and sometimes, high levels of Arcane to hide any trace of the Nephandus' Resonance. It's not easy to corrupt a familiar, but stories do tell of such terrible betrayals.

## WILL-⊕-WISP (2 PTS)

A floating ball of glowing light — or is it just swamp gas?

**Type:** Bygone

**Nature:** Child

**Attributes:** Strength 1, Dexterity 5, Stamina 2, Charisma 2, Manipulation 1, Appearance 0, Perception 2, Intelligence 2, Wits 2

**Abilities:** Alertness 1, Athletics 1, Awareness 1, Dodge 1, Subterfuge 1, Performance 2, Stealth 3, Enigmas 3

**Willpower:** 5

**Essence:** 5

**Charms:** Entrancement (3 pts), Flight (1 pt), Illuminate (1 pt), Insubstantial (7 pts), Quintessence Grazing (0 pts)

## ZOMBIE (2 PTS)

An excellent bodyguard — just make sure to keep him covered up with a hat, dark glasses and thick overcoat; you don't want his stitches or sickly pallor to show.

**Type:** Undead

**Nature:** Monster

**Attributes:** Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3, Charisma 0, Manipulation 3, Appearance 0, Perception 3, Intelligence 1, Wits 2

**Abilities:** Alertness 1, Brawl 4, Intimidation 2, Drive 1, Firearms 3, Melee 1, Occult 3

**Willpower:** 5

**Essence:** 5

**Charms:** Fear (4 pts), Resilience (3 levels; 6 pts), Soak Lethal and Aggravated (2 pts)

**Health Levels:** Bruised (-0), Bruised (-0), Bruised (-0), Bruised (-0), Hurt (-1), Injured (-1), Wounded (-2), Mauled (-2), Crippled (-5), Incapacitated.

# EXPERIENCE



The bond formed between a familiar and its mage is so tight that in some cases they could almost be one person. In the case of experience points, they are. A mage's experience points can be spent to raise a familiar's Traits, allowing the familiar to grow in power along with its mage. (Note: Once play has begun, a mage cannot raise a familiar's Traits by spending more experience on the Familiar Background.)

Trait	Cost
New Ability	3
Willpower	New rating
Essence	New rating x2
Ability	New rating x2
Attribute	New rating x4
Familiar Charm	Point cost x 3

# FAMILIAR

NAME:  
IMAGE:

TYPE:  
NATURE:

BACKGROUND POINTS:  
CONCEPT:

## ATTRIBUTES

### PHYSICAL

Strength\_\_\_\_\_00000  
Dexterity\_\_\_\_\_00000  
Stamina\_\_\_\_\_00000

### SOCIAL

Charisma\_\_\_\_\_00000  
Manipulation\_\_\_\_\_00000  
Appearance\_\_\_\_\_00000

### MENTAL

Perception\_\_\_\_\_00000  
Intelligence\_\_\_\_\_00000  
Wits\_\_\_\_\_00000

## ABILITIES

### TALENTS

Alertness\_\_\_\_\_00000  
Athletics\_\_\_\_\_00000  
Awareness\_\_\_\_\_00000  
Brawl\_\_\_\_\_00000  
Dodge\_\_\_\_\_00000  
Expression\_\_\_\_\_00000  
Intimidation\_\_\_\_\_00000  
Leadership\_\_\_\_\_00000  
Streetwise\_\_\_\_\_00000  
Subterfuge\_\_\_\_\_00000

### SKILLS

Crafts\_\_\_\_\_00000  
Drive\_\_\_\_\_00000  
Etiquette\_\_\_\_\_00000  
Firearms\_\_\_\_\_00000  
Meditation\_\_\_\_\_00000  
Melee\_\_\_\_\_00000  
Performance\_\_\_\_\_00000  
Stealth\_\_\_\_\_00000  
Survival\_\_\_\_\_00000  
Technology\_\_\_\_\_00000

### KNOWLEDGES

Academics\_\_\_\_\_00000  
Computer\_\_\_\_\_00000  
Cosmology\_\_\_\_\_00000  
Enigmas\_\_\_\_\_00000  
Investigation\_\_\_\_\_00000  
Law\_\_\_\_\_00000  
Linguistics\_\_\_\_\_00000  
Medicine\_\_\_\_\_00000  
Occult\_\_\_\_\_00000  
Science\_\_\_\_\_00000

## CHARITIS


## ADVANTAGES

### COMBAT

Weapon/Maneuver	Difficulty	Damage

### WILLPOWER

0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0  
□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

### ESSENCE

0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0  
□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

### PARADOX

□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □  
□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □  
□ □ □ □ □

### HEALTH

Bruised	-0	□
Bruised	-0	□
Bruised	-0	□
Bruised	-0	□
Bruised	-0	□
Bruised	-0	□
Bruised	-0	□
Bruised	-0	□
Hurt	-1	□
Injured	-1	□
Wounded	-2	□
Mauled	-2	□
Crippled	-5	□
Incapacitated		□

### EXPERIENCE

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# WHAT IS THE ONYX PATH?

WINTER 2011-2012: (VTM) V20 COMPANION

SPRING 2012: (VTM) CHILDREN OF THE REVOLUTION

SUMMER 2012: (VTM) HUNTERS HUNTED 2

FALL 2012: (WTA) WEREWOLF: THE APOCALYPSE – 20TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION

WINTER 2012-2013: (MTA) MAGE CONVENTION BOOK



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## QUESTIONS?

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STORYTELLING IN THE  
DIGITAL AGE